HITLER AND I

by

OTTO STRASSER

With an Introduction by
DOUGLAS REED



Cheshire
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Translated from the French by
GWENDA DAVID
and
ERIC MOSBACHER

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INTRODUCTION

AT the beginning of 1940 I wrote a book, *Nemesis?*, which told the story of a man then little known outside Germany, Otto Strasser. It described his upbringing and his distinguished service in the war we once called Great; his political peregrinations in the crazy and turbulent post-war German years; his eventual enlistment under Hitler's flag, his disillusionment with, and breakaway from, Hitler; and his unremitting struggle, now ten years old, in Germany and in exile, against this Hitler whom he thinks guilty of betraying the German cause. *Nemesis?* also described Otto Strasser's most stimulating political philosophy and his plans for the re-making of Germany on a juster social basis.

I felt that both Otto Strasser's fight against Hitler and his political ideas needed to be far better known in Britain, and also the importance of the part he yet might play if fate were kind — kind to him and to the other enemies of Hitler.

This book contains Strasser's own narrative of his work for, his encounters with, and his long and lonely fight against, Hitler. Some of it covers ground already broken in *Nemesis?*, but this is the man's own story, in his own style, and fascinating it is. Much of it is of permanent historical value. No other man could have saved for posterity such immortal anecdotes as that of the conspiracy among Hitler's fellow-prisoners at Landsberg in 1923-24, led by Otto's brother Gregor, to get Hitler to write his memoirs, because his wordiness was a bore, and that of the convivial party of National Socialist leaders, far back in the days before the attainment of power, at which the first-comers agreed that each newcomer should be asked if he had read *Mein Kampf*, the first to answer 'Yes' having to pay the bill — with the result that each paid his own bill!

In another book, *Germany Tomorrow*, which is to appear simultaneously with this, Otto Strasser expounds at greater length and more clearly than I could in a couple of chapters of *Nemesis?*, his remarkable conception of a 'German Socialism' and his proposals for a new Germany in a new Europe.

Much has changed since I wrote *Nemesis?* Then, at the dawn of 1940, I saw with jubilation that we had been given an unexpected, perhaps unmerited, but at all events invaluable respite of many months and — making an over-optimistic assumption for the first time in three books in favour of my own country — I calculated that we should so use that heaven-sent time that we should in the spring be far beyond the reach of defeat, though not within sight of victory.

The eight months were not fully used and their history, when it comes to be written, will be more astounding and more difficult to believe than the seven years of ostrichism and wishful thinking which led to this war. The result is that, as I write this introduction, we are faced with the bitterest struggle in our history, and the odds against us have lengthened ominously to our disadvantage.

As Otto Strasser writes in his forword, Hitler is staking everything on victory before the autumn, and by our own faults of dilatoriness and dawdling, prolonged from the seven pre-war years into the first eight months of the very war itself, we have gambled away the certainty of his defeat which those eight months should have given us. If we can hold out for three or four months, we should, once more, be safe; Hitler's downfall would, once more, be certain.

In these circumstances, the part that Otto Strasser may play is, like all else, in the lap of fate. If Hitler's gigantic venture fails, Otto Strasser will once more loom large in the picture. We have heard much of the Fifth Column in this and other countries. That the biggest Fifth Column,

potentially, in the world is in Germany has seemingly been overlooked.

Whatever impends, these two books belong to history.

DOUGLAS REED

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

In the early morning of November 9th, 1939, the world was startled by the report of an attempt on Hitler's life, the occasion being the traditional reunion in the Burgerbräukeller of Munich. Responsibility was laid by the Nazi propagandists at my door, as Leader of the Black Front, and at that of the British Secret Service. Such accusations are not worth answering. The incident had quite another significance: it was the signal for the opening of the second phase of Hitler's war.

The first phase was the Polish campaign, which Hitler and his General Staff regarded as a mere police action, to be accompanied by a peace offensive against the Western powers. It was the unexpected failure of this offensive that determined Hitler to end the war in the West by a lightning victory.

In this war he has one objective: to destroy the power of Britain. France is a secondary consideration, like Belgium important only as a jumping-off ground. But to bring Britain to her knees there must be an effective blockade, to be followed by the landing of troops and crowned by a peace dictated from Buckingham Palace. Peace with France would follow as a natural consequence, and Hitler, as Emperor of Europe, would have reached the first stage towards world domination.

To secure the submarine and air bases essential for this twofold military and economic attack upon Britain, Hitler decided upon the invasion of Holland. He reckoned on no great military outlay, and was confident that Belgium would remain neutral, thus preventing effective Allied assistance. The invasion was planned for November 12th, 1939, and the Munich explosion was arranged a day or two earlier for

the purpose of arousing public opinion against perfidious Albion. It was thanks to the diplomacy of the Western powers, and to an even greater extent to her own enlightened self-interest, that on November 11th and 12th Belgium announced that in the event of an invasion she would fight at the side of Holland, thus opening the way for Allied assistance to the Low Countries.

The plan for a minor war therefore had to be abandoned. Instead a major war had to be undertaken, and this necessarily demanded several months' preparation. The first step was the invasion of Denmark and Norway, to secure the eastern seaboard of the North Sea and to protect northern Germany from a British counter-offensive. The incidental acquisition of Danish food supplies and Norwegian minerals was of secondary importance, for Germany's internal situation, grave economic and financial difficulties, and above all the prospect of America's entry on the side of the Allies, made it imperative for Hitler to end the war, 'one way or the other', by the beginning of October 1940.

The success of Hitler's Scandinavian venture was a serious setback for Britain, and enabled him exactly one month later to deliver his next blow, the invasion of Holland and Belgium. Fourteen days after the opening of this gigantic offensive German tanks had reached Boulogne, driving a wedge between the Allied armies and bringing the south coast of England within the range of German guns. From the bases thus gained in April and May, Hitler unquestionably plans to launch a direct and indirect attack upon Britain.

In this situation the attitude of the German people is a crucial factor. Since 1933 no fewer than two million men and women have been cast into prisons and concentration camps, and thousands more murdered in cold blood. For nearly seven years the German opposition has been left alone to carry on its struggle against Hitler, while the statesmen

of the whole world shook his bloodstained hand or accepted invitations to the hunting parties of the mass-murderer Goering, an attitude which made possible an unbroken succession of triumphs in the field of foreign politics. No nation, and certainly no army, would revolt against a system which produced the Concordat with the Vatican, the Non-Aggression Pact with Poland, the Anglo-German Naval Treaty, the recovery of the Saar territory, the reconstitution of the army, the reoccupation of the Rhineland, the Anschluss with Austria, and even the conquest of Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia 'without spilling a single drop of blood'.

Each of these triumphs struck a blow at the German opposition. But the latent revolutionary situation in the Reich is still maintained. It is the chief reason why Hitler must end the war 'one way or the other' by October 1st, 1940, and it is the chief hope of all friends of freedom. If it is to pass from a latent into an acute revolutionary phase, a military defeat is essential. The outbreak of internal unrest is possible only after Hitler's 'Battle of the Marne'; possible, and certain!

OTTO STRASSER

May 1940



CHAPTER I

MY FIRST MEETING WITH HITLER

'COME and have lunch with us to-morrow and meet General Ludendorff and Adolf Hitler . . . I insist on your coming, it's very important.'

These words, spoken by my brother Gregor, came to me over the telephone at Deggendorf in Bavaria, where I was spending my holidays with my parents in October, 1920. Gregor sensed my hesitation, and he was aware of my mistrust of Hitler and his propaganda, but he insisted. My acceptance of his invitation was a turning-point in my life, affecting my whole future.

What young German officer would not have leapt at the chance of meeting General Ludendorff? In the chaotic state that Germany was in then, what young German could have had so little curiosity as not to want to see for himself what Adolf Hitler was like? For the youth of Germany, eager to create a new future, was then starting to rally round him.

My brother's invitation came to me at a crucial moment. Not long before I had left the Socialist Party, and I was still searching for my way.

Six months earlier the celebrated Kapp *putsch* had taken place in Berlin, on which occasion I had fought

valiantly for the Weimar Republic. I had led three squads of Berlin working-men against Colonel Erhardt's Brigade and General Luttwitz's Regiment. Erhardt and Luttwitz had wished to seize power and set up a reactionary government. Militarily our forces (we were known as the 'Reds' to distinguish us from the reactionary 'Whites') had been defeated. Erhardt had marched triumphantly into Berlin by the Brandenburg Gate, and, with the capital at his feet, had said to Kapp, former governor of East Prussia and the civil leader of the insurrection, 'I have put your foot in the stirrup, and now it is up to you to govern'.

The legal Government had fled to Stuttgart, and for three days the *putschists* were able to enjoy their ephemeral victory. A general strike was immediately declared and was followed by rioting in the streets.

Bloody fighting took place in the neighbourhood of Wesel in the Ruhr. General Luttwitz, Colonel Erhardt and Governor Kapp fled to Sweden. The Socialists, of whom I was one, declared themselves ready to lay down their arms, subject to terms, which included the purging of the Army and the socialization of heavy industry, and they signed the Bielefeld Agreement with the Minister, Herr Severing. The Communists, however, did not lay down their arms, and carried on a bloodthirsty struggle. In order to suppress them the Weimar Government did not hesitate to use the decapitated and defeated troops of Luttwitz and Erhardt. As soon as the Communists were crushed the perjurous Government repudiated

its promises to the Socialists and announced that Severing had had no authority to sign any agreement with us.

It was as a consequence of this shocking state of affairs that I left the Socialist Party. I was disheartened by the outcome of events in Germany, and felt like a ship without a rudder. I was a young student of law and economics, a Left Wing student leader, and a leader of ex-soldier students.

At home with my parents day followed day in monotonous succession, as in the days of my childhood. My father was still an official of the town court, he still went to Mass on Sundays and still talked politics on the way home from church regularly every week. He had once written an anonymous pamphlet, entitled *The New Way, an Essay in Social Christianity*, and this was still his main preoccupation. My mother had aged, and the house had gradually emptied.

My eldest brother Paul had become a Benedictine, my younger brother Anton was at boarding-school, and Gregor, my senior by five years, and my sister were both married.

Next day's outing therefore promised to be a welcome change, and I looked forward to breathing a little fresh air.

It is about sixty miles from Deggendorf to Landshut, in Lower Bavaria, where Gregor was living with his young wife. I took an early train, and walked from the station under a clear autumn sky. Gregor kept a chemist's shop in the high street, and it was a meeting

place for all the notables of the town. I expected t be early, but I noticed that the iron shutters wer down, and a beautiful car was standing in front of th house. General Ludendorff and Hitler must hav come from Munich by road, and they had arrive before me.

Gregor quickly introduced us. I was first impresse with Ludendorff. He had heavy features and a firr double chin. There was something compelling abou the way he gazed at you from under his bushy brow and in spite of his civilian clothes he looked every inc a general. One sensed his will-power immediately His companion, who wore a blue suit, seemed to b trying to occupy as small a place upon his chair a possible. He appeared to be trying to shelter unde the redoubtable general's wing. What shall I say c Adolf Hitler's personal appearance? It was the entirely unfamiliar. He was a man of thirty-one, wit regular features and a stubbly moustache. His fac was not yet lined with thought. The pouches tha were later to appear under his eyes were scarcel visible. That face that has since become familiar t the whole world had not yet assumed its true signi ficance. Hitler was a young man like other young men His pallor indicated lack of fresh air and physica exercise.

We went in to lunch. Ludendorff kept his inquisi torial eye upon me.

'Your brother has spoken to me about you,' h said. 'How many years' service have you done?'

'Four-and-a-half years, sir,' I replied. 'I was the youngest Bavarian volunteer. I served for three years in the ranks, and for a year and a half as second-lieutenant and lieutenant. I was in the army from August 2, 1914, until June 30, 1919, and was twice wounded.'

'Bravo,' said Ludendorff. Raising his clear green glass, which rested on a massive stem, he offered to drink with each of us. We all naturally responded to his gesture, but to my astonishment I noticed that Hitler's glass contained nothing but water.

'Herr Hitler is a teetotaler,' Gregor explained, with a host's smile. 'He is also a vegetarian,' he added, with a glance almost of apprehension at his wife.

The roast had just been brought in.

'Herr Hitler will not offend me by refusing my cooking,' my little sister-in-law said calmly, but at the same time challengingly.

An instinctive dislike of the guest who had been thrust on her was perceptible in her eyes and her whole attitude.

Else never approved of her husband's intimacy with Adolf Hitler. She tolerated him during the years that followed without ever daring to express her revulsion aloud. But her hostility to Hitler never changed.

That day Adolf Hitler ate meat. I do not think he has done so since.

Ludendorff pursued his inquiries about my military career.

'And how did you come to be recommended for the Order of Max-Joseph?'

The decoration to which the general referred was an extremely rare one, of which I was deprived by the ending of the war. I had been recommended for it as a consequence of a deed of arms recorded in the Golden Book of the First Regiment of Bavarian Light Artillery, a crack regiment in which I was proud of having served. Bubbling over with youthful pride and enthusiasm, I described the incident to General Ludendorff, while Adolf Hitler, suddenly embarrassed at having been no more than a corporal and having no military exploits of his own to boast about, enclosed himself in a hostile silence.

On several occasions when Ludendorff spoke to him he answered with a 'Yes, your Excellency', or 'Exactly, your Excellency'. His manner was both obsequious and sullen.

Gregor, who had been an officer too, but was already on very close terms with Hitler, felt uncomfortable. The harmony of his lunch party seemed to be imperilled, and the plans that he had built on it appeared to be vanishing into thin air. Gregor, as leader of the Nationalist ex-service men of Bavaria, had incorporated his followers in the National-Socialist movement that spring. He had founded the first provincial branch of the Party, and was thus Hitler's first *Gauleiter*. Thus, both as host and as politician, the turn the luncheon was taking was naturally displeasing to him. With his innate organizing gifts and the authority that the chemist shares with the doctor and the priest in the provinces, he had

succeeded in converting the distrustful and uncouth Bavarians to Hitler's cause. Was he to fail with his own brother?

We went into the sitting-room, a dark room with heavy oak furniture.

The general, reclining in a leather arm-chair, pondered, a cigar between his lips. Hitler could not keep still, but kept pacing up and down with lowered head, no doubt meditating his revenge.

He suddenly turned and made a frontal attack upon me.

'Herr Strasser,' he said, 'I do not understand how it is possible for a loyal ex-officer like you to have been a Red leader during the Kapp *putsch* in March.'

He must have heard the story from my brother. At last he was upon his own ground.

'My "Reds", Herr Hitler,' I replied, 'acted in support of the legal Government of the country. They were not rebels, as you seem to imply, but patriots, who were trying to check the rebellious followers of a few reactionary generals.'

Hitler gradually worked up to a high state of excitement.

'No,' he replied, 'one must not be satisfied with the letter, one must try to penetrate to the spirit. The Kapp *putsch* was necessary, though it was ineffectively carried out. The "Versailles Government" must be overthrown.'

Never did I hear Hitler talk of the 'Weimar Republic'. He always spoke of the 'Versailles Govern-

ment', and always used the phrase with profound contempt.

I found myself in a somewhat difficult position. Had I been alone with Hitler, I should have replied with my usual vehemence. But Ludendorff was present, and Ludendorff's rôle during the famous *putsch* had not been at all clear. He had been in the Unter den Linden in Berlin at the very hour of Erhardt's victorious entry. Was he a chance spectator or a secret accomplice? I have never found out.

'The reactionaries,' I said, 'exploited the political ignorance of a lot of patriotic officers. During the War Kapp was hand-in-glove with Tirpitz, the Prussian reactionaries, the Junkers, heavy industry, Thyssen and Krupp. The Kapp *putsch* was no more or less than an attempted *coup d'état*.'

Ludendorff, whose thoughts had seemed to be elsewhere, then intervened and took my part.

'He is right,' he said. 'The Kapp *putsch* was senseless. One must start by gaining the people, in order to be able to dispense with force.'

Hitler immediately became outwardly docile and obsequious.

'Yes, your Excellency,' he said sonorously.

Then he continued in a monotonous voice:

'That is the object of my movement. I wish to inflame the people to the idea of revenge. Only the people and its total fanaticism can make us win the next war.'

I was shocked by this idea and opposed it vigorously.

'There is no question of revenge and there is no question of war,' I replied. 'Our Socialism must be "national" in order to establish a new order in Germany and not to set out on a new policy of conquests.'

'Yes,' said Gregor, who had been listening very seriously, 'from the Right we shall take nationalism, which has so disastrously allied itself with capitalism, and from the Left we shall take socialism, which has made such an unhappy union with internationalism. Thus we shall form the National-Socialism which will be the motive force of a new Germany and a new Europe.'

'And,' I continued, 'the emphasis in this amalgamation must be on the socialism. Don't you call your movement *Nationalsozialist* in a single word, Herr Hitler? German grammar tells us that in compound words of this kind the first part serves to qualify the second, which is the essential part.'

I then proceeded to quote some quite undeniable examples to illustrate this feature of the German language, which is very rich in compounds of this kind. I saw Hitler flush, and a vertical line appeared on his forehead, intersecting a horizontal line.

'But perhaps your Baltic adviser, Herr Rosenberg, is too ignorant of the German language to appreciate the *nuance*,' I added somewhat maliciously.

Hitler suddenly lost patience and struck the table furiously with his fist.

'Enough of this hair-splitting,' he exclaimed. He then made an effort to regain his self-control, and with

a half-serious, half-mocking smile, turned to my brother Gregor and said:

'I am afraid I shall never get on well with this intellectual brother of yours.'

I then witnessed one of those exhibitions of rhetorical acrobatics for which Hitler was to become famous. Side-stepping an argument on a level at which his elementary-standard intelligence could not follow me, he launched out into a violent anti-Semitic tirade, completely evading the issue.

'Playing about with ideas like that is quite useless,' he said, once more addressing himself to me. 'What I am talking about is reality, and reality is Jewry. Look at the Communist Jew who was Marx and the capitalist Jew who is Rathenau. All evil comes from the Jews, who pollute the world. Ever since I have got to know them, ever since I have come to understand them, I have been unable to meet a man in the street without wondering whether he was a Jew or not. Jews control the Social-Democratic Press. They conceal their fiendish devices behind a mask of reformist ideals. Their aim is the destruction of the nation and the obliteration of the differences between races. Jews lead the workers and talk of improving their lot; in reality they aim at enslaving them, and killing their patriotism and their honour in order to establish the international dictatorship of Jewry. What they cannot achieve by persuasion they will try to achieve by force. Their organization is flawless, they have their fingers in every pie. They have their

agents in all the Ministries, and they even pull strings in the highest places in the land; and they have the support of their co-religionists all over the world; they are an ulcer leading to the downfall of nations and individuals.'

The more persuasive Hitler tried to be, the more critical did I become. He paused for breath and saw me smile.

'You do not know the Jews, Herr Hitler, and permit me to tell you that you over-estimate them,' I replied. 'The Jew, you see, is above all adaptable. He exploits existing possibilities, but creates nothing. He makes use of socialism, he utilizes capitalism, he would even exploit National-Socialism if you gave him the chance. He adapts himself to circumstances with a suppleness of which, apart from him, only the Chinese is capable. Marx invented nothing. Socialism has always had three sides. Marx, in collaboration with the good German Engels, studied its economic side, the Italian Mazzini examined its national and religious implications, and Bakunin, a Russian, developed its Nihilist side, from which Bolshevism was born. Thus you see that socialism was not of Jewish origin at all.'

'Certainly not,' Ludendorff agreed. 'The old economic principles are out-of-date. No regeneration is possible apart from National-Socialism properly understood. That alone can cause prosperity to return to our country.'

'I wish to give the German people a touch of the

whip to pull them together and make them capable of crushing France.'

'You still stress the nationalist side. Once more you misunderstand the principle of the thing. I certainly don't approve of the Treaty of Versailles, but the idea of fighting France seems stupid to me. The day will come when the two countries will have to unite to fight Russian Bolshevism.'

Hitler made an impatient gesture.

I suddenly thought of the Red Terror in Munich, when I, an ex-officer just come out of hospital, joined the force of General von Epp to fight the Bolsheviks in Bavaria. Where was Hitler that day? In what corner of Munich was the soldier skulking who should have been fighting in our ranks?

As though divining my thoughts, he came over to me, tapped me familiarly on the shoulder and summoned up all his charm.

'After all,' he said, 'I would still rather be hanged on a Communist gibbet than become a German Minister by the grace of France.'

Ludendorff rose to say good-bye, and Hitler followed him.

'Well?' said my brother when he returned after accompanying the two men to the door.

'I liked Ludendorff,' I said. 'He's not brilliant, like Conrad von Hötzendorf, the unrecognized genius who was generalissimo of the Austro-Hungarian armies, but he is a man. As for Hitler, I thought him too servile towards the general, too quick in argument and

in the art of isolating his opponent. He has no political convictions, he has the eloquence of a loud-speaker.'

'Perhaps,' said Gregor, 'his corporal's stripes are pinned to his body. All the same there's something about him. He has a magnetic quality which it is difficult to resist. What fine things we could do if we could use him to express your ideas, employing Ludendorff's energy and my own organizing ability to carry them out.'

CHAPTER II

THE GERMAN CAULDRON

I AM not setting out to write a political book. But it is impossible to understand Hitler and the tumultuous upheavals that carried him to the top of the German cauldron without knowing something of the pestilential atmosphere that prevailed in the conquered and ruined Reich, and the obscure forces and the bloodshed that ravaged it.

The past was in ruins, the present shattered, the future without hope. Such, at least, was our conviction when we finally became aware of the tragic impotence of the men put into power by the so-called revolution of 1918.

The Kaiser had fled. The victorious Allies believed that they had replaced the hated régime of Wilhelm II with a model government more democratic than their own. But in reality nothing had changed behind the illusory façade, except that suffering and want had turned men into wild beasts.

I think of my old comrade Möller van den Bruck, the Rousseau of the German Revolution (he committed suicide on the day he realized that Hitler had betrayed his ideas), with whom, immediately after the Treaty of Versailles, I founded the June Club for the purpose of the resurrection of Germany. 'We have lost the War,' he said to me, 'but we shall win the Revolution.'

Was it a wretched illusion, this hope of regenerating a nation governed by aged bureaucrats and cowardly petty bourgeois?

A malicious caricaturist, desiring to show Germany in the meanest and most contemptible light, could have done no better than to depict those moral and physical bureaucrats Scheidemann, Severing and Ebert, and those commonplace, methodical bourgeois, Erzberger, Fehrenbach and Wirth.

A government of weak mediocrity, utterly lacking in ideas, in faith and in political knowledge, was installed over a heap of ruins. It was more like a bankruptcy court than a civil government.

Ebert, the man of the 'golden mean', had become President of the German Republic in an entirely illegal fashion. Those who worked out the new constitution had mistrusted their own work as much as they mistrusted the German people.

They dared not even risk an election. Not that that mattered, because there was nothing Republican about the German state except in name, and there were no Republicans.

A saying of Ebert's, which was a revelation to me of what the future had in store, is worth repeating in this context. 'I hate the revolution,' he said one day, 'as much as I hate sin.' I was still young and enthusiastic, and I did not admit of compromise. 'In the first place,' I said to Möller van den Bruck, who was as profoundly disillusioned as I, 'he hates the revolution because he hates sin. Would Danton have hated sin?'

Danton indeed! I smile to-day at having compared the timorous Ebert to the hero of the French Revolution.

Finally, to return to bankrupt Germany, where the word 'Royal' on the façades of all the public buildings had been erased, or simply covered up, civil disorders went on side by side with the stereotyped and unalterable routine of the various Ministries. In vain had the Allies ordained the suppression of German militarism and the influence of the generals, for the old functionaries remained, the Weimar Republic had recognized their 'well-founded rights', and they were irremovable.

Privy Councillors tyrannized over the ephemeral Ministers, and orders were only carried out in so far as they served the interests of the bureaucracy.

After securing my law degree, I entered the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Supply.

Not long afterwards a new Minister, Herr Hermes, was appointed. Desiring to retain the services of his private secretary in his new office, he informed the secret counsellor of the Ministry of the fact. The latter, however, declared that there was no vacancy for Herr Hermes' secretary. If Herr Hermes insisted, a special Parliamentary vote would be necessary to sanction the expense. He left to Herr Hermes the task of justifying the proposed appointment before Parliament.

Poor Hermes obviously never got his secretary, and all his most confidential letters, typed in triplicate, were submitted to the censorship of the secret and irremovable counsellor.

In the meantime what was happening to the country? Germany was seething. Foreigners, little desirous of penetrating beneath the surface, reported that foul vapours were rising from the German cauldon, but they did not feel seriously alarmed. They did not realize that the shock of passions and the excess of suffering were breeding a monstrous reaction that bore within it the seed of an exasperated Prussianism and another war.

Hitler and the obscure acolytes who led him into power are the products of that seething cauldron.

Germany had lost the War, but that was not all. The people were famished. Agricultural productivity had declined throughout Europe. The Empires of Central Europe had been bled white by the blockade. A hundred and twenty million German marks had been invested in war loans. The middle class was proletarianized, the small *rentiers* expropriated. I do not believe that in 1922 more than three per cent of the German population possessed a fortune of five thousand gold marks. Insurance companies had ceased all payments. Men and women who had spent their lives scratching and saving to provide themselves with a modicum of security for their old age were dying in complete destitution. Disabled war pensioners drew no pensions. And this state of affairs was not, as one might suppose, the result of the onerous Treaty of Versailles but the immediate consequence of the War itself, which had ruined the country's economic life.

The immediate problem was that of demobilization.

Unemployed ex-soldiers frequently rose in insurrection in order to prevent the complete annihilation of their world, and still more to escape from hunger, the spectre of unemployment, and a hopeless future.

The soldiers returned from the front. One-and-a-half million men were withdrawn from occupied Poland, and three hundred thousand officers and seven or eight hundred thousand non-commissioned officers led aimless and hopeless lives in Berlin and the other big cities of Germany. The heroes of the fighting in the Baltic, where Germany defended Finland against the Russians, returned under the leadership of von der Goltz, Captain Stenes and Lieutenant Rossbach. If there is anyone to-day still naïve enough to believe in Adolf Hitler's good faith, at least in so far as the ideals of the German people are concerned, let him think of the sacrifices of the German soldiers in that struggle, and then let him consider the Führer's attitude in the Russo-Finnish conflict. Moreover, Hitler failed to participate in the spontaneous battles that the Germans fought after the War, for their lives and for their honour. He was not a member of the armed force led by General von Epp which overthrew the Red dictatorship of Kurt Eisner in 1919, nor was he among the men of von der Goltz. When bloodthirsty fighting broke out in Upper Silesia, where German *Freikorps* defended the frontiers of Germany against the Poles, Hitler, addressing a band of Austrian volunteers, tried his hardest to dissuade them from fighting. His eloquence failed to convince them or to

restrain them, and he stayed at home, meditating the diabolical plan which, despite all his treachery and double-dealing, was to lead him to power.

Those who retained their sanity in this maelstrom tried to combat the ossification of the régime, and to reveal the truth behind the hypocritical façade of this bureaucrats' democracy. At the first Congress of Soviets of Workers and Soldiers, attended by the Social-Democrats, the Independent German Social-Democrats (the U.S.D.P., from which the German Communist Party was born) and the Soldiers' Fraction, Helferding, a so-called Left Democrat, who later became a Minister, made a fantastic speech which caused all important decisions to be postponed for ever.

We were then demanding, as we did later, in the course of the Kapp *putsch*, the socialization of the mines and of heavy industry.

'This demand,' Helferding declared, 'does honour to your revolutionary feelings, but political questions cannot be settled by feelings.'

For four hours the learned orator explained to his astonished audience that the present state of science made pure socialism absolutely impossible, and he concluded by proposing the setting up of a special commission to examine the problem. Trustfully the workers, soldiers and ex-officers agreed. The commission sat for months and years, but I never saw the slightest sign of a report or of any concrete work done by it. The commission died as it was born, and the problem remained unsolved.

Jewish profiteers then made their appearance, intensifying the anti-Semitism always latent in the German people.

Traders, profiting from the famine and the progressive devaluation of the mark, bought goods abroad and sold them in Germany at exorbitant prices. They exploited the Reichsbank, skilfully insinuated themselves into the Government machine, established invaluable contacts with high officials, and even pulled strings in Ministers' private offices, thus compromising those who should have represented authority and defended the poor against their exploiters. The scandals that surrounded the names of Galician Jews such as Kutisker, Barmatt and Sklareck caused the precarious edifice of German finance to totter and roused a storm of indignation. The exploits of the Barmatt brothers, who were expelled from Germany, were continued in shameless fashion in Holland, where another scandal broke out a year ago as a result of their criminal operations. The three Sklareck brothers continued their unsavoury activities in Czechoslovakia.

Big German industry finished the work begun by speculators. Stinnes, the industrial magnate, who started in the coal transport trade, made a colossal fortune and bought out all his competitors, ruining smaller concerns. Inflation set in. Every month, every week, every day and every hour the value of the mark declined.

Our salaries were paid daily, and it was difficult to

adjust them to the inflationary landslide. A thing you wanted in the morning you bought at once, because by the afternoon the price might have doubled, trebled or quintupled. Foreigners arrived in numbers and with dollars, pounds or francs bought objects of art or of prime necessity that natives could no longer afford. In the face of this immoral spectacle xenophobia grew. Soon the dollar was worth 4,200,000,000,000 marks. An ordinary postage stamp cost twelve thousand million marks.

Anger mounted among the people, and the streets echoed with noisy demonstrations. Desperation was reflected on every face, desperation of the kind that can lead to outbursts of irreparable violence. The impotent Government declared it necessary to avert the danger of revolution. But, embedded as it was in the old prejudices of the Wilhelm era, it scented danger on the Left only, and failed to foresee the possibility of insurrection from the Right.

It should have taken warning, however, from the assassination of Erzberger in 1920, carried out by two naval officers, Lieutenant Schult and Sub-Lieutenant Tillessen, belonging to Erhardt's Brigade. The disorganization of the German Navy was even more complete than that of the Army. The latter had been demobilized gradually, and numbers of ex-officers found posts as agents, in insurance companies, banks, or in industry. But the officers of the former Imperial Navy were all unemployed, and their outlook was hopeless. The German fleet had been destroyed, and

the merchant navy was reduced to ten per cent of its pre-War strength.

Erhardt, who fled to Sweden after the failure of the Kapp *putsch*, was the leader of a secret anti-Government society, the O.C. (the Consul Organization). Erzberger was murdered by his instructions. Although the blow came from the Right, it did not open the eyes of the Weimar Government.

Henceforward assassinations and acts of violence came alternately from Right and Left.

In 1921 an attempt was made upon Scheidemann, the Social-Democratic leader and ex-Chancellor of the Reich. This too was organized by Erhardt's accomplices.

An infamous campaign of slander was directed against Ebert, the man of the 'golden mean', who, in spite of all his efforts, never succeeded in pleasing anybody.

In 1922 the reactionaries of the Right murdered Walther Rathenau, the big Jewish industrialist who as Minister of Foreign Affairs was responsible for the Treaty of Rapallo, which was signed with the Russians.

The first popular rising took place in 1919, organized by the Communists. During the same year von Epp drove the Communists out of Munich. The Kapp *putsch*, organized by the military party of the Right, occurred in 1920, and ended with bloody fighting in the Ruhr.

In 1921 there were risings in Central Germany at Halle, Merzberg and Magdeburg.

During the same year the Communists rose at Hamburg, and in 1922 Hoelz, a friend of the Soviets, also attempted a *coup*. He was forced to flee to Russia, where, like others among the Red Tsar's servants, he was subsequently executed by Stalin.

From the clash of interests and the subterranean convulsions of a Germany ignored by the German leaders and the European Powers, two political movements arose, that of the extreme Right and of the extreme Left. At first the more moderate elements prevailed in both. But, while Western Europe rested on its laurels, Russia was perpetually alert, and never lost sight of the ups and downs of German politics. Zinoviev, the leader of the Russian Comintern, who has also since been executed by Stalin, succeeded in playing a leading rôle at the Halle Congress of the Socialist Party. I was still a student then, and, being obliged to earn a living, attended the Congress in the capacity of correspondent of a Dutch newspaper and a Swiss periodical. I have rarely heard such a gifted and eloquent person as Zinoviev. In a seven-hour speech he succeeded in splitting the Socialist Party and converting half its adherents to Communism. The majority of the U.S.P.D. subsequently formed the K.P.D., the Communist Party of Germany, and the latter soon became the spearhead of the extreme Left movement.

The Right consisted of the Stahlhelm ('steel-helmets'), led by Seldte and Düsterberg, and the National-Socialist German Workers' Party (the

N.S.D.A.P. or Nazi Party), led by Hitler. Right radicalism did not make much headway until later, under the growing influence of my brother Gregor and myself.

Never did the proverb about extremes meeting prove truer than of post-War Germany. The best elements of Right and Left would have made an excellent combination. Moves towards reconciliation were not lacking, but they were vain and illusory. The last, under the aegis of Adolf Hitler, failed like the rest. I remember this abortive *rapprochement* between Hitler and the Third International very well. It took place very shortly after the execution of Schlageter in the Ruhr. The Nationalist deputy Count von Reventlow, who subsequently became a loyal follower of Hitler's, then edited a Right Wing newspaper, the *Reichswacht*; Radek, of the Third International, edited the *Rote Fahne*; and the two, brought together by the mediation of the Nazi Party, agreed to exchange contributions. The result was that the astonished readers of the *Reichswacht* were presented with a signed article by Radek in praise of Schlageter, 'the pilgrim towards the void'.

Much ink has been spilled over Schlageter. Nazi Germany has made him one of her national heroes. For objective people who knew the young man, who was consumed with a passion for liberty and a feverish desire for action, the case of Schlageter is more complicated. What would have become of the young visionary and rebel, the fierce enemy of collectivism and discipline, under the Hitler régime?

Would not he too have risen against tyranny? Would not the 'pilgrim towards the void', who walked to his death as in a dream, have risen again to defend his beloved country against the most infamous of violations? The June 30 purge would scarcely have spared him.

German culture, manners, literature, the theatre and the cinema necessarily reflected these dangerous and troubled times, when morality foundered in the need for forgetfulness, intoxication, sensationalism and eccentric pleasures.

Night-clubs sprang up like mushrooms. Naked dancers exhibited themselves to the applause of audiences drunk with liquor and lubricity. It was the era of sadism and masochism, of perversion, eccentricity and crankiness of every kind. Homosexuality and astrology flourished.

Nobody can have forgotten the trials of the monster Kürten and of Haarmann, the Vampire of Düsseldorf.

One of the most curious phenomena of the post-War period was undoubtedly Hanussen, the supreme clairvoyant, who acted as medium to that other clairvoyant named Adolf Hitler. Hitler is generally believed to have got rid of Hanussen, as he got rid of so many of his other friends, as soon as they became inconvenient. In reality this was not the case. Hanussen was a Jew, and believed that Hitler's racial principles might one day be applied to his disadvantage. He therefore tried to conciliate Count Helldorf, a pervert who was perpetually short of money, by lending him large sums, in

exchange for which he was given receipts which he carried in his wallet. But Helldorf had no intention of repaying this inconvenient creditor. As soon as he became police chief after Hitler's accession to power, he had him murdered. Hanussen had foreseen everything but this. The receipts signed by Helldorf were never found.

These chaotic times led to a morbid, realist school of drama. The romanticism of the period was that of prostitution. On the screen we saw Greta Garbo's first film, *Joyless Street*, the scenario of which was based on a novel by Bettauer, an Austrian who was murdered by his irritated readers one night in the streets of Vienna. At the theatre we applauded Bronnen's *Parricide*, Toller's *Such is Life*, and *The Castrate*, a play which, as the title implies, symbolized the life of the whole Reich. We listened to the *Dreigroschenoper*, *Mahagonni* and the music of Kurt Weill. And while Left Wing drama established itself on the stage, in the literary field there were published the political and philosophical works of the men of the Right who were Hitler's unconscious pioneers. No future historian will be able to understand and explain the present Third Reich without having read Spengler's *Decline of the West* and *Prussianism and Socialism*, Grimms' *A People without Space*, *The Heritage of the Disinherited*, and other works of the same species. Among the most interesting I hasten to quote *The Right Revolution* and *The Third Reich* by my friend Möller van den Bruck, who was the purest of the pure among them.

Spengler, who deified Prussianism, had a memorable discussion with Möller van den Bruck on one occasion at the June Club, where we arranged a meeting between these two great spirits of the age. Spengler's great aim was to put socialism in the service of Prussianism. This is what Hitler did. Möller van den Bruck summarized his views in the following phrase: 'We were Teutons, we are Germans, we shall be Europeans.' But Hitler never understood him.

In 1920 Adolf Hitler, referring to my friend's *Third Reich*, used to say: 'The First Reich was that of Bismarck, the second that of the Versailles Republic, and the third is myself.'

'No,' I replied, whenever I heard him repeat this monstrosity, 'Möller van den Bruck said the First Reich was Charlemagne's Christian and federal Holy Roman Empire, the second was that of Wilhelm and Bismarck, and the third must again be federal, Christian and European.'

CHAPTER III

THE CONSPIRATORS OF THE BÜRGERBRÄU

'ORDERS have come from Munich. It's for to-night!'

Heinrich Himmler, my brother's adjutant, stood to attention in Gregor's office, breathless with excitement.

'Orders from Hitler?'

'Yes.'

For weeks past, and more particularly during the last few days of April, 1923, Hitler had been declaring at numerous meetings that rather than allow the Red demonstrations to take place on May 1 the Reds would have to trample over his dead body. The time for action seemed to have come. The various formations of the Right were about to make a forcible reply to recent Communist risings.

Orders came from headquarters to the villages of Lower Bavaria, and throughout April 30 rapid and mysterious preparations were made in the little town of Landshut. Gregor's patriotic ex-soldiers — for the past three years they had been Nazi stormtroopers — joyfully equipped themselves for the conquest of a new Germany. Scarcely a house but contained hidden arms, lovingly caressed by impatient hands, waiting for the great day of the Revolution.

A number of old lorries had been put at the disposal of the insurgents.

At nightfall the men of Landshut marched off, wearing the famous field-grey which had been worn by millions during the Great War. The lorries, lit only by lanterns, set out along the flat road that crosses the plain from Dachau to the neighbourhood of Munich. My brother Gregor commanded this little army of three thousand men. There was something eerie about the strange convoy as it made its way through the moonless night.

Suddenly the silence was shattered by the violent blowing of motor horns. The landscape was lit up by the headlights of a number of fast police-cars, which rapidly overtook Gregor's slow-moving convoy.

'*Schuppos!* Police!' murmured Gregor's men.

The police lieutenant ordered Gregor's lorry to stop. The two leaders stood face to face.

'Good heavens!' exclaimed Gregor. 'Where did you spring from?'

'From Landshut, like you,' replied Lieutenant Georg Höfler, his brother-in-law.

On leaving the army Georg Höfler had joined the police department, and he was now chief of police at Landshut.

'But where are you going?' said Gregor.

'To Munich, like you.'

'Are you with us or against us?'

'I don't know. We shall be given our orders at Munich.'

For a moment Gregor and Georg Höfler stared at each other, undecided. One was a blond giant with

muscles of steel, the other thinner and more delicate, but with a bronzed face stamped with courage and resolution.

'Well, we shall see to-morrow,' Gregor philosophically remarked.

'Good luck!' replied Höfler, shaking hands with him.

The police cars started off again in a trail of dust, and the lorries full of stormtroopers pursued their way more sedately behind them.

This nocturnal encounter was the first comic scene in a farce which has often been described to me by Gregor and my brother-in-law.

'It was a dress rehearsal,' Gregor assured me in his description of the events of May 1, and when I told him that in my opinion the principal actor, Hitler, ought to have been hissed from the stage, he shrugged his shoulders, as though to say 'You'll never understand him'.

Gregor continued his way through the night, tormented by the thought that either Hitler was in league with the Government, and the *schuppos* had been sent to Munich to support the *putsch*, in which case the revolution would be more stultified than ever, or the secret was out, in which case the insurgents, deprived of the trump card of surprise, would all be under lock and key that same night.

However, the convoy reached Munich without further incident. At the big Munich parade ground of Oberwiesenfeld the junction of the three paramilitary

formations duly took place. The stormtroopers, commanded by Goering, were there in force, and they were joined by Dr. Weber's Oberland Freikorps and the Reichsbanner led by Captain Heiss. The *coup* was to be attempted under the auspices of General Ludendorff, the political leadership was Adolf Hitler's and the military command was in the hands of Lieutenant-Colonel Kriebel.

The junction was effected at eight o'clock in the morning. A hot sun, worthy of July, played upon twenty thousand steel helmets and twenty thousand threadbare uniforms, dating from the War. The only detachment that yet wore brown shirts was that of the Munich stormtroopers, led by Lieutenant Rossbach. Brown shirts were much disliked by Adolf Hitler, but Lieutenant Rossbach, who was also the Reich youth organizer, had caused his recruits to adopt them.

All Adolf Hitler's men were there, including Hermann Goering in a uniform which had grown much too tight for him, Frick, Hess and Streicher, Gregor Strasser and his inseparable Himmler — all the big and little actors in the Hitlerian drama, those destined to play leading rôles, those destined to remain in obscurity, those destined to be ruthlessly obliterated.

Eight o'clock passed, and then nine o'clock and ten o'clock. Adolf Hitler stood with puckered brows. From time to time he raised his heavy steel helmet to wipe the sweat from his forelock. Time passed and the agreed signal did not come.

At eleven o'clock a Reichswehr detachment ap-

peared on the horizon, flanked right and left by men in the green police uniform. The demonstrators of the Oberwiesenfeld were rapidly surrounded. The police were under the command of Lieutenant Georg Höfler. Among the military officers was Captain Roehm.

Like a maniac, Hitler made for Captain Roehm. His eyes were flashing, and he was almost foaming at the mouth.

'Have you betrayed us?' he angrily demanded.

But Roehm was not frightened of Hitler, whom he still regarded as a corporal belonging to the 7th Division, commanded by his friend General von Epp. Roehm had known Hitler since 1919, since when he had employed him as a political spy. Roehm was on Epp's staff, and was also responsible to the Reichswehr for political questions in Bavaria. He used non-commissioned officers and men as agents to keep him informed of all sorts of secret political activities. He had sent Hitler to find out all about the young Nazi Party, which was starting to be talked about in Munich. The corporal's report had been enthusiastic.

'They are small people, sir, working men, but they are anti-Marxists!'

Roehm had a quick mind, he was a first-class organizer, and he knew men. For a long time he had been impressed by Hitler's magnetism, and he promptly ordered him to join the new party and try to gain influence over it.

Hitler acquitted himself so well in this new rôle that within a few months he had completely outshadowed

Drechsler, the founder of the Party, and it did not take him long to get rid of another leading member, the engineer Harrer.

With Roehm's money Hitler had been able to organize the Party and found the S.A., the storm-troopers, that important paramilitary organization to which the regular Army, forced to disarm by the Treaty of Versailles, handed over arms which it desired to conceal from Allied supervision. Also with Roehm's money, Hitler had been able to buy the *Völkischer Beobachter*, a local bi-weekly which was to become the organ of National-Socialism.

Roehm still regarded Hitler as his tool. Hitler's giddy career in the Nazi Party had not opened his eyes. All he had for the angry, exasperated man with blood-shot eyes in front of him was a friendly, protective gesture. Roehm was a giant, accustomed to talk as a master. Even General von Epp was tied to his apron-strings. He was used to treating his colleagues as his puppets.

'What is happening?' Hitler repeated.

'The time is not yet ripe. The Government and the Reichswehr are tolerating the Red First of May demonstrations. North Germany is not yet ready,' Captain Roehm coldly replied.

Hitler looked into his eyes, then lowered his head.

'The time is not yet ripe,' he was explaining to his followers a few moments later.

Gregor and Kriebel, however, still favoured action, and would have liked to have fired on the Reichswehr,

but Hitler, taciturn and glowering, refused all day to yield to the most intrepid counsels.

Surrounded by the forces of the law, the proud insurgents of the early morning were unable to go home until after dark. The Red demonstrations passed off without incident, and the Nazis were covered with ridicule.

The humiliating memory of the Oberwiesenfeld defeat was never effaced from Hitler's mind. The rancour he nourished against Roehm was born that day.

Sleeplessly, night and day, Hitler prepared the Nazi Party's revenge.

The setting up of a Red government in Saxo-Thuringia helped to throw oil on the flames. This time Roehm seemed to have made up his mind, and General von Epp rallied to the side of the plotters.

The Government, suddenly alarmed at the progress of Communism in the North, now tried to isolate Southern Germany. It wished to avert a civil war, which would have been the inevitable consequence of a Nazi *coup* attempted on a nation-wide scale. On September 26 von Kahr, a man with an iron hand, was appointed State Commissioner for Bavaria, von Epp was removed from the active list and replaced by General von Lossow, and soldiers were made to take the oath, not to the Reich but to Bavaria only. Ludendorff was forbidden to enter or remain in Munich.

Ludendorff and Epp were furious. Roehm, who saw

his influence at an end, was livid. Hitler could scarcely restrain his rage, and Gregor, who always favoured the bolder course, counselled action at the earliest opportunity. In his opinion it was necessary to coerce the new Bavarian authorities into rallying to the insurgents of the Right and marching with them and their men against Communist Prussia and the North.

The conspirators met every evening in the private rooms of the Bürgerbräu, a Munich brasserie and restaurant, which also had a big hall for public meetings. One of the frequenters of the Bürgerbräu was Goering, an officer in the Air Force and an accomplished soldier, who would not have chosen an adventurer's life if he could have remained in his profession. A former pupil of the Cadet School, Hermann had the restricted outlook of the professional officer class. He was a man of barely average intelligence, and of pronounced physical brutality. He liked food, drink, and conviviality.

Another habitué was Heinrich Himmler, an unemployed agriculturist, who had once vainly hoped to become an officer. 'You'll remain infantile all your life', and 'You've got the soul and sensibilities of a butcher', were two of the things that my brother Gregor used to say to him. Himmler was not cruel, but he was incapable of emotion or suffering. Later he arrested his own brother at the Führer's orders, and he would have killed his parents without a moment's hesitation if the Führer had ordered him to do so. With regard to women, Himmler always reminded me

of Gretchen's phrase in *Faust*, 'Heinrich, you inspire me with horror'. He had had only one sexual adventure, which he described to me himself. This, he said, was at the age of thirty-two. He spent a night at an inn, where he was seduced by the landlady, who was ten years older than he. He remained attached to the woman who performed this miracle.

Of Rudolf Hess there is little to say. He was a handsome young man, an intellectual and an artist, an officer and a poet. He was enthusiastic and faithful. He never faltered in his passion for Adolf Hitler. So great, in fact, was his sentimental admiration for Adolf that evil tongues used to call him 'Fräulein Hess'. I myself believe, however, that the relationship was absolutely pure.

Nothing could be more striking than the contrast between him and the sexually abnormal Julius Streicher. Never have I met a man more haunted by erotic fantasies. For Streicher the racial theories of National-Socialism were merely an excuse for unloading into the *Stürmer* the dangerous outpourings of his diseased imagination. 'A sexual crime committed by a Jew on the front page of my paper is like a delicious cocktail, a meal starting with caviare,' he once said to me. He was a man whose ugliness was repulsive to women. During the war he was degraded for an indecent assault upon a young French governess.

Lastly Frick must be included in the list of plotters. Frick was less interesting in himself than for the man on whose behalf he acted. Frick was honest, straight-

forward and without malice. As a police official, he had the ear of Poehner, the Munich chief of police and leader of the Bavarian Monarchists. Poehner himself was a conspirator on a grand scale, and he shrank from nothing. It was thanks to him that Ludendorff was allowed to remain in Munich after the Kapp *putsch* and that Erzberger's murderers were enabled to return to Germany, provided with false passports. While dreaming of the restoration of the Wittelsbachs, he used Frick to keep his eye on the progress of the Nazi Party, which he intended to use for his own ends. He was killed in a mysterious motor accident in 1925, and it has been maintained that he met his death at Hitler's orders.

Frick thus completed a group of which the other members were Goering, Roehm, Gregor Strasser, Hess and Streicher. He was a skilful lawyer and rendered great services to the Party, and he was the oldest of the plotters, practically the only one of them who had a home, a job, and a settled life.

How were they to gain von Kahr, General von Lossow and Seisser, the chief of the Bavarian police? If this triumvirate, who represented Bavarian authority, could be won over, Hitler felt sure of victory. The military as well as the political revolution could start from Bavaria, for he had Ludendorff with him, and Ludendorff's authority still counted, even with the Prussian generals.

Hitler entered into conversations with von Kahr, von Lossow and Seisser. He has a weakness for good

education and men of old German stock, and titles are not without their effect on him. But after hearing Hitler's exposition of his plans, Lossow decided he was a megalomaniac and had grave doubts about the success of the enterprise. Von Kahr was a Monarchist and very ambitious, and he wanted power for himself. He tried to temporize, and invented a thousand pretexts in the hope of abating Adolf's enthusiasm. But Adolf had decided to act. When von Kahr asked to whom he intended entrusting the political control of Germany, he answered simply 'Myself'.

Von Kahr was naturally hostile to such a proposal. Von Lossow asked for guarantees, and Seisser was as hesitant as either of them.

Hitler therefore decided to force their hand. The date of the *putsch* was originally fixed for the 10th and 11th of November. But at the last moment, learning that von Kahr was holding a meeting at the Bürgerbräukeller at which he was to make a speech on the programme of the Bavarian Monarchists, Hitler altered the date. November 8 was solemnly fixed as the historic date of the German Revolution.

Hitler's instinct ought to have told him that it would have been better to have left these aged servants of a decrepit régime out of it. Both Kahr, Lossow and Seisser had served under the Kaiser. In spite of incessant discussions, which dragged on for week after week, no serious steps had yet been taken by Hermann Goering. But Hitler wanted action, and with a handful of followers proposed taking the risk of com-

promising the great German national revolution for ever.

Hitler had six hundred men. Gregor Strasser, warned late, assembled three hundred and fifty storm-troopers at Landshut and led them to Munich. General Ludendorff, who had not been kept informed of what was going on, was at Ludwigshöhe, where a motor-car was hurriedly sent to fetch him.

On the fatal day Adolf wore a frock-coat, on which he pinned his Iron Cross. He proposed bursting into the hall at the head of his men while paramilitary detachments surrounded the building, whereupon von Kahr, before even beginning his speech, would be forced to surrender to the insistence of the heavily armed *putschists*.

'He cannot help joining us,' Hitler said to Scheubner-Richter, whose mission it was to fetch General Ludendorff to Munich. 'Once Kahr is persuaded the others will follow.'

Strong in this conviction, Adolf gravely got into the car that took him to the Bürgerbräu.

At the entrance the young fanatic with the Iron Cross kept asking to speak to Governor Kahr, but the dense crowd refused to let him pass. He was pale and trembling, and looked like a madman. Inside the hall the meeting had already begun and von Kahr had started his speech.

Hitler hesitated, but it was too late to go back. He listened, and could hear the steps of his faithful shock-troops.

'Clear the vestibule!' he ordered the policeman on duty at the entrance. Impressed by the Iron Cross, the policeman obeyed. A few minutes later the stormtroopers marched in. Adolf waited for them with his eyes closed and his hands in his pockets, where there was a revolver. He felt the eyes of his young men upon him, but he had not yet decided what to do if his *coup* failed and the triumvirate refused to march with him.

Like a maniac he burst into the hall, where three thousand Bavarians, seated before their beer-mugs, were listening to the unctuous oratory of von Kahr. Adolf jumped on to a chair, fired his revolver at the ceiling, and shouted, his hoarse voice half-quenched with excitement:

'The National Revolution has begun!'

Meanwhile the stormtroopers had followed him into the hall, where the beer-drinkers, dumb with astonishment, found themselves face to face with Hitler's revolution.

What were the police doing during all this time?

Poehner, their chief, was hand-in-glove with Hitler, and had promised him his entire support. He was busy Cabinet-making for the new régime, while Dr. Frick, his right-hand-man, saw to it that the forces of law and order put no obstacle in Hitler's way.

The story of the Munich *putsch* has been told many times, and we shall pass rapidly over the events that followed.

Adolf ordered Kahr, Lossow and Seisser to follow

him into a neighbouring room, and there began the famous conversation in the course of which the revolutionary, over whose corpse the Reds should by rights have trampled on the previous May 1, now swore that if his *putsch* failed he would blow his brains out.

It was a stirring moment. Adolf pressed his revolver to his temples.

'Gentlemen', he declared, 'not one of us shall leave this hall alive! There are three of you, and I have four bullets. That will be enough for all of us in case I fail.'

In reality, of course, Adolf had no more thought of killing the three representatives of authority than he had of killing himself. Did he not admit in the course of his trial that 'Kahr looked so downhearted that he was pitiable to behold', and did he not declare his anguish at 'having to use force on officers'?

He had them in his power. Why were they indispensable to him? He might have acted without them. But their approbation was vital to him, for to Hitler public applause is a necessity. In cowardly fashion he grasped at the first straw that Kahr skilfully held out to him.

'All that is very fine,' Kahr said, 'but I am a Monarchist. I cannot accept the regency that you offer me except as a representative of the Monarchy.'

Fine words indeed! A real revolutionary would have arrested an adversary thus bound to the old régime, but Hitler was only too happy to swallow words that gave him the illusion of being admitted to court.

'Your Excellency,' he exclaimed, 'understand me. We owe reparation to the Royal Family, which has been shamefully wronged. If Your Excellency will permit me, on leaving here I shall immediately go and see His Majesty and tell him that the Great German movement will repair the wrong done to His Majesty's late father.'

Thus the Republican Hitler was willing to go in person to see the Crown Prince Rupprecht and tell him, standing to attention, that his late father would be avenged!

Meanwhile he believed that he had won. Von Lossow and Seisser associated themselves with what Kahr said. A glance of mutual understanding passed between them. Hitler still had his revolver, so it was just as well to humour him, without prejudice to what they might do in the future.

It is worth noting that the only shot that Hitler fired that day was at the ceiling. Von Kahr need have had no anxiety.

Everything seemed to have been arranged amicably, and the Royalist Republican and the revolutionary Monarchists went back to the meeting arm-in-arm.

But Hitler could not resist one more appeal to the public. Without the applause of the Munich beer-drinkers he was unable to act. So he started haranguing, pleading, arguing his cause.

'I propose myself to assume the political leadership of the National Government until we have dealt with the criminals who are leading our country to ruin,'

he declared. 'Von Kahr is Regent of Bavaria, Poehner is Prime Minister, His Excellency General Ludendorff will command the national army. General von Lossow will be the Minister for the Reichswehr, Colonel von Seisser will be Reich Minister of Police. . . . The task of the Provisional Government is to march on the New Babylon, Berlin . . . I ask you if you are in agreement? . . .'

Meanwhile Ludendorff had arrived. He was deathly pale, and events had taken him by surprise, but he did not lose his composure.

'Of my own authority I declare that I put myself at the disposal of the National Government,' he declared.

The general acted 'of his own authority', but the dictator harangued, pleaded and argued with the mob.

Nothing could have delighted the beer-drinkers more. They were jubilant. Hitler and von Kahr fervently shook hands.

Hitler desired to proceed with the immediate setting up of his Cabinet, but von Kahr said he was tired, and suggested that it would be better to discuss the matter when they were fresh next morning.

The most pressing preoccupation of these revolutionaries and governors of the New Germany was about going to bed. But there was nothing surprising about that. Was it not over a beer-mug that Hitler applied himself to the task of winning over von Kahr, two minutes after threatening him with his revolver?

'I implore Your Excellency . . . (a good swill at the beer mug) . . . not to lose from sight . . . (another swill)

. . . the common cause . . . (another swill) . . . and the interests of Germany . . . (another swill) . . . tomorrow the National Government will be in power, or we shall be dead.'

Idle words! Twice that evening Hitler swore that failure would mean his death. But he managed to survive.

Von Kahr prepared his counter-stroke the same night. The Right paramilitary formation, the Kampfbund, made an attempt to seize several public buildings, but was repulsed. But not till morning did Hitler begin to suspect treachery on the part of his ally.

'At dawn we were back at the Bürgerbräu', he said later, 'and Ludendorff joined us. But no sign of life came to us, and at midday we were still without news.'

Thus the hours passed without Hitler's trying to see clearly for himself. His all-consuming impulse was to harangue the crowd, to make speech after speech, to assure himself of the approbation of the petty bourgeoisie.

At midday it was decided that there should be a 'propaganda march' through the city. By this time Munich was full of military and police. The procession set out with Hitler and Ludendorff at its head, and the armed stormtroopers marched in the rear. Hitler, optimistically believing that he had the crowd with him, did not believe there would be any fighting.

Actually it was immaterial whether the crowd were with him or not. However loudly it cheered the propagandists in the Marienplatz, however intensely it desired the blood of the 'criminals of 1918', what counted that day was the attitude of the police.

When Hitler's men debouched upon the Feldherrnhalle, the police opened fire.

What followed is among the most disgraceful episodes in post-War history.

While Ludendorff, with head high, marched steadily forward towards the police cordon that was firing upon his men, Hitler, whom Ulrich Graf protected with his body, flung himself flat on the ground.

All the versions that say anything else are false. Hitler flung himself ignominiously to the ground.

In the *mêlée* that followed thirteen Nazis were killed and many were wounded, among them Hermann Goering. Arrests began immediately, but Hitler, the leader of the movement, showed a clean pair of heels. He was whisked away in a private car.

After the affray my brother Gregor, at the head of his men, was able to gain the road to Landshut. On the march home a Reichswehr detachment challenged and stopped them. Colonel Erhardt came forward as intermediary, and advised Gregor to surrender.

'Make way or I fire,' Gregor replied.

The Reichswehr no doubt decided that enough blood had been spilled that day. Gregor and his men

were able to reach their homes without further hindrance.

Next day, just when Gregor and Himmler, still under the emotional stress of the abortive *putsch*, were about to sit down to table, Georg Höfler appeared in full uniform.

'You're just in time for lunch,' said Gregor. 'Sit down.'

'I've come to arrest you,' said Höfler stiffly.

The house had been surrounded by green-uniformed police. Gregor went to Landshut prison, escorted by his brother-in-law.

Adolf Hitler was arrested a few days later. He had fled to Uffing, where he was sheltered by his friend Hanfstängel, later chief of his Press bureau. The police found him hiding in Mlle. Hanfstängel's wardrobe.

CHAPTER IV

HITLER WRITES *MEIN KAMPF*

THE most popular government, if it notoriously breaks its word, risks losing the confidence of the mob. Von Kahr's government had never been popular, and the fashion in which von Kahr duped the revolutionaries of the Bürgerbräu caused it to be hated and despised. The people were angry. The blood shed by the police on November 9 and the feeling of civil war in the air had heated men's minds. The Munich Trial, which was no judicial proceeding but a farce, served, in spite of the indulgence of the judges, to gain fresh sympathy for the National-Socialist cause.

On the other hand Hitler's indefensible attitude caused him to lose temporarily some of his original friends. In some cases the loss was permanent.

The trial opened at Munich at the beginning of 1924. Hitler was at this time one of the few *putschists* confined in the fortress of Landsberg. His original depression had by now given place to a revival of optimism. The thirteen corpses of the Feldherrnhalle, the three victims of the fighting between the police and Roehm's detachments no longer weighed on his conscience. The sudden death of his friend and colleague Dietrich Eckhart, whose heart had not stood up to the strain of the previous weeks, only drew from him an egoistical sigh.

'He was a perfect editor; no-one will ever be able to edit the *Völkischer Beobachter* like him,' he said to Drechsler, the founder of the Party, who was with him in prison though he was not implicated in the plot.

A new dawn seemed to be breaking for the defeated revolutionary. The trial would give him marvellous publicity.

Hitler's semi-accomplices, Kahr, Seisser and Lossow, were still in power, and it was greatly to their interest not to attract too much attention to that unlucky evening at the Bürgerbräu.

The accused bore names which compelled the attention of Germany and the whole world. It was indeed an honour to share a dock with Ludendorff, Poehner, Roehm, Weber and Kriebel.

Moreover Hitler had a very useful card up his sleeve. The Bavarian Minister of Justice, Dr. Gürtner, was his friend. A few months on remand in prison had entirely changed the heart of the ex-painter of Braunau. He took his stand before the court not as a revolutionary but as a public benefactor. He was now entirely loyal to the authority of the state. Never again would he bid for power by force; he would woo it as a demagogue, and gain it at the price of a thousand concessions.

Thus the Munich Trial began. The judges carefully avoided asking awkward questions, and the accused answered according to their character, their interests and their honour.

Adolf's main object was to demonstrate the utter

innocence and purity of his intentions. He humoured the mighty, and bowed respectfully to the president of the court.

'I did not plan a revolution,' he declared; 'on the contrary, I wished to aid the authority of the state to create the unity of our country.'

Intoxicated with his own eloquence, he ended his speech to the court with the following grandiloquent phrases:

'In view of the unhappy state of our country, I do not wish to draw a final barrier between us and those who in the future will form part of the great common front that we shall have to set up to face the enemies of our people. I know that our enemies of to-day will one day think with respect of those who chose the bitter way of death for the love of the German people.'

Ludendorff's evidence should have produced some interesting revelations, but the prosecution, primed by the complaisant Minister Gürtner, successfully applied itself to the task of stifling the voice of truth. The indomitable general's confession of faith is, however, worth comparing with the empty verbiage of the chief of the Nazi party.

'The hopes that I had of the deliverance of my country on November 8,' declared Ludendorff, 'vanished because Kahr, Lossow and Seisser lost the common goal from sight, and when the great hour came they turned out to be little men. The dangers that I saw are still there. The most painful thing for me is that events have convinced me that our rulers

have shown themselves incapable of inspiring the German people with the wish for liberty.'

Ludendorff also said something else that should have been said by the socialist Adolf Hitler. 'Marxism cannot be killed with rifle-butts,' he said, 'but a new idea must be given to the people.'

The military prisoners all behaved with more dignity than the civilians.

Poehner, the chief of police, was magnificent. He laughed at the attempts of the court and the conspirators to minimize his guilt.

'Of course I am a traitor,' was the phrase he hurled in the teeth of his judges. 'Wouldn't it be absurd to try to prove the opposite in a court of law?'

Roehm, who had not organized the *putsch*, but, like Gregor, had only commanded a detachment of the Party's paramilitary forces, was indignant at Adolf's cowardly attitude. He knew that Goering, chief of the S.A., had fled and was hiding abroad. Roehm was the only man of November 8 who had attempted any military action. He had seized the Reichswehr building and had been driven out of it by force. Once more Hitler, the former corporal in his regiment, had let him down. He resolutely sided with General Ludendorff. In his reminiscences, which he entitled *Memoirs of a Man Guilty of High Treason*, he severely criticized the men and the methods of the November *putsch*.

So great was his disgust that as soon as he was released from the fortress of Landsberg he parted from

Hitler and wrote an open letter to the *Völkischer Beobachter* in which he announced his breach with the Party. The following passage in his memoirs was suppressed after his reconciliation with Hitler:

'I know that certain men refuse to listen to those who warn them of danger; I do not approve of them. A true friendship used to bind me to Hitler. Flatterers surrounded him, no one dared to criticize him, but it was my duty to speak to him openly.'

Soon there was such high feeling among the prisoners that they split into two camps and refused to sit beside each other. Hitler remained with Weber and Frick, while Ludendorff, Poehner, Kriebel and Roehm formed a group on their own.

The trial dragged on for weeks and months without the shadows clearing. The various rôles were, so to speak, written in advance. Thanks to Gürtner, the Minister of Justice, Adolf was assured of not incurring the penalty he dreaded most, namely expulsion from Germany. Not having done his military service in Austria, he had forfeited his Austrian nationality, and he had not yet acquired German nationality. Had he been expelled from Germany, he would have been a man without a country, unwanted everywhere. More than one mystery surrounds Hitler's past. He is known to have served in the German Army during the war, but how and where he won his Iron Cross is unknown, and no doubt always will be.

The court delivered its judgment on April 1. Ludendorff was the only one to be acquitted. The

principal accused, Hitler, Poehner, Weber and Kriebel were sentenced to five years' imprisonment in a fortress, while the secondary figures, Gregor Strasser, Frick and several others, were let off with eighteen months, a year or six months. All the prisoners, however, could count on being released before the end of their term, though Hitler's case was complicated by the fact that this was not his first conviction.

Five years' imprisonment for Adolf Hitler! The news spread like wildfire through Southern Germany, and the people, whose heartstrings were easily wrung, made him a martyr of the German cause. Ridiculous coloured postcards pictured him in a gloomy cell, his grief-stricken countenance illuminated by the pale rays of sunlight that peeped in through a heavily-barred window. But while he was thus an object of pity to the public outside, Adolf, installed in the most comfortable of fortresses, was contentedly putting on weight.

Landsberg was more like a military club than a prison. Each prisoner had one or two rooms at his disposal. They received visitors, passed the time together, talked, smoked, played cards and ordered any delicacies they required from the gaoler.

Those on the ground floor would actually have been very happy indeed but for the unfortunate tendency of 'the man on the first floor' to make interminable

speeches. Needless to say, 'the man on the first floor' was Adolf Hitler.

One day the conspirators downstairs held a council of war to discuss ways and means of protecting themselves from Adolf's eloquence. Gregor Strasser had the brilliant idea of trying to persuade him to write a book.

The suggestion that he should write his memoirs was therefore gently and tactfully put to him. Adolf positively leapt at it. Henceforward Strasser and the other 'gentlemen' on the ground floor were able to drink and play cards in peace. Hitler kept to himself, pacing up and down his room. Emile Maurice, his chauffeur and handyman, provided him with company.

Adolf practised his eloquence, the effectiveness of which he had already discovered, on this sinister individual, who was to play a bloodthirsty rôle on the night of June 30.

Meanwhile the National-Socialist Party, deprived of its leader, underwent a grave crisis. The anti-Semites tried to gain control of it, while the people, impressed by the *putsch* and the Munich Trial, rallied to the movement.

The Bavarian elections of 1924 resulted in Hitler's party gaining twenty-seven seats, at a time when the latter was opposed to his followers' sitting in Parliament at all.

Among the successful candidates were Poehner and Gregor Strasser. Their election permitted them to leave the fortress of Landsberg without serving the remainder of their term.

The tendency at the time was for all the Nationalist political groupings to fuse into a single bloc. The Nazi Party, which was banned as the result of the *putsch*, sank its identity in the Popular Liberty Movement, founded by Albert von Graefe. The leaders of the 'National-Socialist Liberty Movement' were Ludendorff, Graefe and my brother Gregor, acting as deputy for Adolf Hitler.

But a profound gulf divided Ludendorff and Poehner, who became president of the Bavarian parliamentary group, from Hitler. Hitler refused to receive Ludendorff, and Gregor therefore acted as go-between. It was at this stage that Rosenberg, Dietrich Eckhart's successor as editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, started to play an important rôle. Rosenberg worked hand-in-hand with Gregor. He was a Baltic *émigré* who had fled from the Bolsheviks. His political influence on Hitler, whom he visited at Landsberg every day, grew stronger and stronger. Munich was then the centre of White Russian emigration. Rosenberg tried to make the National-Socialist movement serve the interests of his Baltic compatriots.

Men like Ludendorff, Gregor, and Rosenberg (who is a person of decent and respectable morals) could not possibly put up for long with the activities of persons such as Julius Streicher and Hermann Esser. These

two, who were worthy of each other, represented not the street but the gutter.

I myself advised Gregor, when I saw him hesitating, to avoid splitting the party and parting from Hitler. But two sexual maniacs like Streicher and Esser could only throw discredit on those who still honestly desired a new Germany. They were demagogues of the worst type. With Christian Weber, and Hofmann, the 'court photographer', they must be numbered among the obscure acolytes of the Führer of whom Germany has every reason to be ashamed. Hermann Esser, in particular, had avoided war service by shamming madness. This, however, had not prevented him from becoming a member of the Soldiers' Soviet, and to-day he is Bavarian Minister and Under-Secretary of State for the Reich Ministry of Propaganda. Julius Streicher and Hermann Esser share everything. They have the same views and the same women.

Ludendorff, Graefe and Strasser agreed to expel them from the Party. They immediately founded the 'Anti-Semitic Movement', in which they found an outlet for their diseased sexuality by composing pornographic diatribes against the Jews.

Hitler, however, in his fortress, did not commit himself to either side. He received Gregor and Rosenberg, listened to Streicher and Esser, and mentally noted those on whom he could still rely, thus keeping the future open.

If he offered his resignation as leader of the Party, it was because he did not wish to be accused of con-

spiring against the state while still serving his term. He was still haunted by the fear of expulsion. His need for 'legality' increased. He felt his party disintegrating in his absence, and looked forward to picking up the reins again as soon as he was free.

In July he started dictating to Rudolf Hess, who was also a prisoner at Landsberg. Hess was completely and utterly devoted to him. There was no fear of criticism from him, and Adolf could be sure that Rudolf would swallow without complaint the historical inaccuracies and extravagant diatribes of which the 'master' unburdened himself.

In its original form *Mein Kampf* was a veritable hotch-potch of commonplaces, schoolboy reminiscences, personal opinions, expressions of personal animosity. Vestiges of Hitler's ill-digested political reading were mingled with fragments from Lueger (founder of the Christian-Social Party in Austria) and Schönerer (leader of the big German and anti-Semitic party founded by the Sudeten Germans under the Dual Monarchy).

Passages reminiscent of Houston Chamberlain and Lagarde, two authors whose ideas had been passed on to Hitler by the unfortunate Dietrich Eckhart, were interspersed with the anti-Semitic ravings of Streicher, including the latter's beliefs about Jewish sexual excesses, and Rosenberg's ingenious ideas on foreign politics. The whole was written in the style of a fifth-form schoolboy, and a not very intelligent one at that. Only a single chapter, if I am to believe Father

Staempfle, who twice revised the entire manuscript, was really original. This was the chapter on propaganda.

Good Father Staempfle, a priest of great learning, editor of a paper at Miessbach, spent months rewriting and editing *Mein Kampf*. He eliminated the more flagrant inaccuracies and the excessively childish platitudes. Hitler never forgave Father Staempfle for getting to know his weaknesses so well. He had him murdered by a 'special death squad' on the night of June 30, 1934.

À propos of *Mein Kampf*, I remember an amusing incident which I shall relate here, though it is anticipating my story by several years.

It took place at the Nazi Party Congress at Nurnberg in 1927. I had been a member of the Party for two-and-a-half years, and presented the annual report. In the course of it I quoted a few phrases from *Mein Kampf*, and this caused a certain sensation.

That evening, at dinner with several colleagues, Feder, Kaufmann, Koch and others, they asked me if I had really read the book, with which not one of them seemed to be familiar. I admitted having quoted some significant passages from it without bothering my head about the context. This caused general amusement, and it was agreed that the first person who joined us who had read *Mein Kampf* should pay the bill for us all. Gregor's answer when he arrived was a resounding 'No', Goebbels shook his head guiltily, Goering burst into loud laughter and Count Reventlow excused himself on the ground that he had no time.

Nobody had read *Mein Kampf*, so everybody had to pay his own bill.

Meanwhile Hitler's 'conversion' had become known in high places. It was certain that never again would he revolt against the Reichswehr or the civil authorities. What was not realized, however, was that if Hitler the revolutionary was dead, Hitler the opportunist was more alive than ever.

Faced with the combative fury of Ludendorff and Gregor Strasser, the Bavarian Government, urged on by the Minister Gürtner, decided on Adolf's premature release.

On December 20, 1924, a telegram addressed to the fortress of Landsberg ordered the immediate release of Hitler and Kriebel. Hitler left the prison the same day. Saul the revolutionary, transformed into Paul the good apostle, left on his journey towards the conquest of power.

His first care was to make peace with Rome. 'One cannot fight two enemies at once,' he explained to the deputy Jürgen von Ramin, who visited him at Landsberg. He adhered to this policy in spite of the attacks of the Right Wing paper the *Reichswart*, edited by Count von Reventlow, and he solemnly informed Herr Heinrich Held, Prime Minister and leader of the Popular Catholic Party of Bavaria, that he condemned General Ludendorff's atheism.

'The latter alone is the enemy of the Roman Church,' declared Hitler, who was profoundly imbued with German paganism, more so, perhaps, than Ludendorff or Rosenberg himself.

He humiliated himself still further, setting the seal on his behaviour a year earlier at the trial.

'The Munich *putsch* was a grave error,' he admitted to Held, the 'reactionary' and 'papist'. Held had it in his power to reconcile him both to Cardinal Faulhaber and the President, but for that it was necessary to abjure the past.

There was also something else. Held had only to speak the word, and the ban on the Nazi Party would be lifted. If this were done the Party would immediately be able to revert to its old shape, and the storm-troopers would be able to resume their activities. Hitler would then become the absolute master of his movement, and would no longer have Ludendorff and Graefe to contend with.

Hitler implored, Gürtner supported him, and Held, who was vain and self-satisfied, agreed with a smile.

'The wild beast is checked,' Held confided to Gürtner the same evening. 'We can afford to loosen the chain.'

All the same Hitler had lost two friends. Roehm went into voluntary exile and left for Bolivia as a military instructor, and Kriebel went to Shanghai, where he was appointed consul on the day that Adolf Hitler, who remained attached to him, became Chancellor of the Reich.

Ludendorff, yielding to my brother Gregor's impor-

tunity, only once agreed to meet his former friend. This was on the occasion of the presidential election that followed Ebert's death.

General Ludendorff was chosen to stand for the Nazis against Field-Marshal Hindenburg, representing the bourgeois bloc. Hitler promised Ludendorff his full support, but he ordered his men to vote for Hindenburg on the second count. It was a flagrant and typical breach of faith.

After making his peace with Rome and the Bavarian Government, Hitler started his first approach towards the living forces of Prussia, the Reichswehr and the capitalists.

Ludendorff scarcely suffered from his political defeat. But he never forgave Hitler's duplicity.

On his death-bed in 1937 he abruptly refused the field-marshal's baton sent him by the Chancellor of the Reich.

CHAPTER V

THE MAN HITLER

It is difficult to judge a man fairly, even when one knows the innermost recesses of his mind. When that man is one's enemy and the object of one's most bitter feelings the task is peculiarly difficult. To analyse objectively a being destined by circumstances to become the instrument of history one must above all be able to distinguish between the man and his mission.

A biographer of a Cromwell or a Robespierre who restricted himself to his hero's personality might very easily falsify history without deviating an inch from the truth.

The drama which we are witnessing in Germany is that of a revolution which has so far only reached its second stage. The years from 1920 to 1930 was the period of preparation. This period had its philosophers, its writers and their apostles, its small-scale Encyclopædists, among whom Möller van den Bruck, whom I have compared to Rousseau, was an eminent figure.

The next period is the period of destruction, when the earth trembles, the foundations of the old order are shaken and the world is given over to fire and the sword. This is the truly revolutionary period, a period which must inevitably give place to a period of reconstruction and consolidation.

Here we will consider only Adolf Hitler. We will

try to discover what were the purely human qualities that make him an incarnation of the principle of destruction.

Hitler responds to the vibration of the human heart with the delicacy of a seismograph, or perhaps of a wireless receiving set, enabling him, with a certainty with which no conscious gift could endow him, to act as a loud-speaker proclaiming the most secret desires, the least admissible instincts, the sufferings and personal revolts of a whole nation. But his very principle is negative. He only knows what he wants to destroy; he pulls down the walls without any idea of what he will build in their place. He is anti-Semitic, anti-Bolshevik, anti-capitalist. He denounces enemies, but knows no friends. He is devoid of any constructive principle.

I remember one of my first conversations with him. It was nearly our first quarrel.

'Power!' screamed Adolf. 'We must have power!'

'Before we gain it,' I replied firmly, 'let us decide what we propose to do with it. Our programme is too vague; we must construct something solid and enduring.'

Hitler, who even then could hardly bear contradiction, thumped the table and barked:

'Power first! Afterwards we can act as circumstances dictate.'

'Hate,' I sometimes said to him, 'must be born of love. One must be capable of loving to know what is hateful, and so have the strength to destroy it.'

He hated without knowing love. He was drunk with an ambition that was utterly without moral restraint, and had the pride of Lucifer, who wished to cast down God from His immortal throne.

Hitler has given two descriptions of himself, the accuracy of which has not been impaired by time. In the first he described himself as 'the young drummer of the German people'. Let us take to heart the words he spoke at the Munich trial, when he pleaded his own cause.

'When I found myself for the first time before Wagner's grave,' he said, 'my heart overflowed with pride to think that there lay a man who had scorned to have inscribed on his tombstone, "Here lies Privy Councillor Musical Director His Excellency Baron Richard von Wagner". I was proud that this man, like so many men in the history of Germany, was content to leave his name to posterity, and not his titles. It was not out of modesty that I desired then and there to be nothing more than a drummer. That for me is the highest achievement; the rest is vanity.'

No, it was certainly not out of modesty that Roehm's little corporal confessed to a contempt for titles.

His ambition was to rouse the masses, to be the centre towards which they gravitated, to go down to posterity.

The other self-revelatory phrase was pronounced twelve years later, when the 'drummer' of the revolution had become Chancellor and President of the Reich. It is even more significant than the first.

'I shall go on my way,' he said, 'with the precision of a sleep-walker.'

I have been asked many times what is the secret of Hitler's extraordinary power as a speaker. I can only attribute it to his uncanny intuition, which infallibly diagnoses the ills from which his audience is suffering. If he tries to bolster up his argument with theories or quotations from books he has only imperfectly understood, he scarcely rises above a very poor mediocrity. But let him throw away his crutches and step out boldly, speaking as the spirit moves him, and he is promptly transformed into one of the greatest speakers of the century.

He makes no attempt to prove his assertions. He is strongest when he speaks of abstractions such as honour, country, nation, family, loyalty; his effectiveness on such matters is quite astonishing.

'When a nation wants liberty arms spring to its hand . . .' 'When a nation has lost faith in the power of its sword it is vowed to the most lamentable destruction.' An educated person, writing these phrases, blushes at their triteness. But spoken by Hitler they inflame the audience, they go straight to every heart.

It would, as a matter of fact, be wrong to imagine that Adolf Hitler was always an utterly unscrupulous demagogue. He was at one time genuinely convinced of the rightness of his cause. He had the feelings of a revolutionary, but not the temper. He had that flair which, in a leader of the masses, takes the place of psychological insight.

Adolf Hitler enters a hall. He snuffs the air. For a minute he gropes, feels his way, senses the atmosphere. Suddenly he bursts forth:

'The individual has ceased to count . . . Germany was trampled underfoot. Germans must be united, the interests of each must be subordinated to the interests of all. I will give you back your honour and make Germany invincible . . .'

His words go like an arrow to their target, he touches each private wound on the raw, liberating the mass unconscious, expressing its innermost aspirations, telling it what it most wants to hear.

Next day, addressing this time an audience not of ruined shopkeepers but of important industrialists, there is the same initial uncertainty. But a flash comes into his eyes, suddenly he has the feel of his audience, he has tuned in.

'Nations are regenerated by individual effort,' he declares. 'Only individual effort counts. The masses are blind and stupid. Each of us is a leader, and Germany is made up of these leaders . . .'

'Hear! Hear!' say the industrialists, and swear henceforward that Hitler is their man.

At the Nurnberg Congress of 1937 he addressed twenty thousand women. They were old and young, ugly and beautiful, married, spinsters and widows, embittered and hopeful, worried and lonely, of respectable morals and otherwise. Hitler knows nothing of woman or of women; yet to his lips there sprang a phrase that provoked delirious enthusiasm:

'What have I given you? What has National-Socialism given you? We have given you Man!'

The response of the audience can only be described as orgiastic.

A clairvoyant, face to face with his public, goes into a trance. That is his moment of real greatness, the moment when he is most genuinely himself. He believes what he says; carried away by a mystic force, he cannot doubt the genuineness of his mission.

But when Adolf is in a normal state it is a different matter. He cannot be straightforward and natural; he never ceases watching himself and playing a conscious part. He began by being the Unknown Soldier who had survived the War. A moving and obscure hero, he shed real tears for his country's misfortunes. Soon he discovered that his lachrymatory glands were obliging and could be turned on at will. After that he wept to the point of excess. Next he was St. John the Baptist, preparing for the coming of the Messiah; then the Messiah himself, pending his appearance in the rôle of Caesar. One day he realized the shattering effect of his rages; henceforward rage and abuse were the favourite weapons in his armoury.

Some time before our rupture we had an argument about *Der Nationalsozialist*, the paper I edited in Berlin. Gregor was present, as well as Hinkel, who was a contributor. For half an hour the Führer advanced an untenable argument.

'But you are mistaken, Herr Hitler,' I said to him.

He fixed me with a stare and exclaimed in a fury:

'I cannôt be mistaken. What I do and say is historical.'

Then he lapsed into a profound silence, his head sank and his shoulders slumped. He looked old and shrunken, exhausted by the part he had been playing.

We left without a word being added.

'Gregor, the man's a megalomaniac!'

'You provoke him,' Gregor replied. 'Your objectivity exasperates him. He never forgets himself like that with me.'

But Gregor was wrong. That day the dogma of Hitler's infallibility was born. It was to be confirmed in many National-Socialist writings, and more particularly in Hermann Goering's recent book.

In the self-dramatization of a hysteric it is not easy to distinguish the conscious from the pathological. There is no doubt that Hitler is unbalanced. When the man is still, which happens rarely, he seems petrified; otherwise he seems not to be able to keep still at all. A train exasperates him by its slowness. A car travelling at less than seventy miles an hour he describes as an ox-cart. He takes a 'plane to save time, but complains that in the air he has no sense of speed.

This man, who has plunged Europe into war without blinking an eyelid, hesitates in agony over minor decisions. Once Gregor had to see him in connection with some minor detail concerning the Landshut stormtroopers. For weeks Hitler excused himself on the grounds of urgent pressure of work. Eventually he

arranged to meet my brother at a restaurant. The meal began well enough, but as soon as Gregor brought the conversation round to the point at issue, Hitler showed signs of discomfort and made an excuse to go out. He left by the side door which led from the cloakroom to the street, and sent his chauffeur back later in the evening to fetch his hat and coat.

He has fits of courage as well as of rage, but ordinarily he is weak, impatient, irascible, unstable and terrified at the thought of endangering his health or losing control of his ideas. He is termed an ascetic, but the description fits his way of living far better than his mentality. Your true ascetic sacrifices the pleasures of the flesh for the sake of an ideal, from which he derives his strength. Adolf's renunciations are purely materialistic; he believes that meat is unhealthy, that smoking is poisonous, and that drink lulls one's vigilance.

This monster, so often uncontrolled, nevertheless dreads moments of confidence or involuntary abandon. He would consider it a supreme disgrace to drop his guard.

I am by temperament mistrustful of those who set no store upon the legitimate pleasures of life. When I think of Adolf Hitler I remember Bismarck's remark that 'a German is only tolerable if he drinks half a bottle of champagne a day'.

'A good German dictator,' I suggested one day, 'should teach the German people to appreciate subtlety in cooking and in love.'

Hitler stared at me wide-eyed, for once at a loss for words. I added:

'A university ought to be founded for the purpose. Germans can't be past masters of any art without a diploma.'

For a moment I thought that Adolf was about to break into a torrent of words. But he stopped short. Instead, dryly, with the most profound contempt, he hissed through clenched teeth:

'You cynic! You sybarite!'

He liked to think of himself as an incarnation of the heroic conception of life, and he called my own attitude Bacchic. It was useless to explain to him that the gods of antiquity loved women and wine none the less for being heroes. This kind of reflection appalled Hitler, who always fought shy of the slightest allusion to or hint of suggestiveness.

His nearest approach to the subject was to say that women destroyed a politician's strength and his judgment.

'There are only two schools for the politician,' I would retort. 'History, which teaches him to understand forces, and woman, who teaches him to understand men.'

The Führer's panic fear of giving himself, of losing himself in a tender emotion, hid a jealously-guarded secret, the whole truth of which was not known even to his intimates.

I have known three women who played a part in the life of this ascetic with the perverse imagination. I was

taken into the confidence of one of them, and it was edifying.

The first was the wife of the Berlin piano-maker, the famous Bechstein. Frau Bechstein was twenty years older than Adolf, and lavished on him an ecstatic and faintly maternal devotion. When he went to Berlin he generally stayed with her, and it was at her house that he met the politicians whose acquaintance he desired to make.

When they were alone, or occasionally in front of friends, he would sit at his hostess's feet, lay his head on her opulent bosom and close his eyes, while her beautiful white hand caressed her big baby's hair, disturbing the historic forelock on the future dictator's brow. '*Wölfchen*,' she murmured tenderly, '*mein Wölfchen*.'[1]

This purely platonic affair eventually ceased to satisfy Adolf Hitler, who made the acquaintance of a younger and unquestionably more attractive female. This was the daughter of Hofmann, the photographer, an exceedingly attractive young blonde, with frank and boyish ways.

Adolescent girls are rarely discreet. Fräulein Hofmann chattered so freely and to such effect that one day her father went to demand an explanation from the seducer of Munich.

Hitler was not yet Chancellor of the Reich, but his fame was growing, and Europe was beginning to talk about him. The matter was soon settled. Hofmann

[1] 'My little wolf, my little wolf.'

left holding the exclusive world rights for Adolf Hitler's photographs. The complaisant father has become one of the richest and most respected men in Germany. In 1933 his daughter was married to Baldur von Schirach, a young effeminate whom the Führer loaded with favours and created Reich Youth Leader.

But the adventures of the master of Germany did not always end in a happy marriage.

About 1928 he took into his home his little niece, an Austrian, amusing, pretty and gay. Angela, or Gely, as we called her, was nineteen, and Uncle Adolf's *ménage* bored her. She wanted to go about, meet people, dance. I used to pay her attentions. She was no prude.

One day I arranged to take her to one of the famous Munich masked balls. While I was dressing Gregor burst into my room.

'Adolf doesn't want you to go out with Gely,' he said.

Before I had time to recover from my astonishment the telephone rang. It was Hitler.

'I learn,' he roared, 'that you are going out with young Gely this evening. I won't allow her to go out with a married man. I'm not going to have any of your filthy Berlin tricks in Munich.'

I had no choice but to submit.

Next day Gely came to see me. She was red-eyed, her round little face was wan, and she had the terrified look of a hunted beast.

'He locked me up,' she sobbed. 'He locks me up every time I say no!'

She did not need much questioning. With anger, horror and disgust she told me of the strange propositions with which her uncle pestered her.

I knew all about Hitler's abnormality. Like all others in the know, I had heard all about the eccentric practices to which Fräulein Hofmann was alleged to have lent herself, but I had genuinely believed that the photographer's daughter was a little hysteric who told lies for the sheer fun of it. But Gely, who was completely ignorant of this other affair of her uncle's, confirmed point by point a story scarcely credible to a healthy-minded man.

What could I say? What advice could I give Gely?

Her confidences, once set flowing, were inexhaustible. Her uncle kept her literally isolated. She was not allowed to see a man. One evening, driven crazy by this treatment, she had yielded to the importunities of Emile Maurice, Hitler's chauffeur. Hitler had surprised them.

Her ear to the door, she had heard the words that passed between these two men, both of whom she dreaded equally.

'You'll never set foot in this house again!'

'Sack me, and I'll take the whole story to the *Frankfurter Zeitung*!'

The blackmail succeeded. Emile Maurice, richer by twenty thousand marks, set himself up in a watchmaker's shop in Munich.

All this was incredibly disgusting, and I could find no word of comfort for this girl who, had she not been prematurely corrupted, might one day have made a good wife and mother.

Poor Gely! I hardly saw her again. My final break with Hitler came not long afterwards. She died mysteriously in 1931. I was not to learn the horrible circumstances until much later.

Having thus by chance lifted a corner of the veil that hides his private life, and knowing his incapacity for normal love, and his perverted methods of procuring vicarious satisfaction, I could not feel for Hitler's pseudo-asceticism the respect which, despite my 'Bacchic' ideas, I have always felt for genuine morality.

Hitler lived on the fringe of life, of women and of love. His real friends were recruited from a special and unsavoury world, while by his actions and his bad faith he systematically alienated the men of integrity who would have fought at his side.

Ludendorff broke with him. Poehner disowned him. Hellmuth von Mücke, commander of the *Emden*, a Party deputy, refused to follow him to the end. Where there were decent men among his followers, obstinate in their loyalty like my brother Gregor, the time came when their presence proved awkward, and he had them murdered.

He is surrounded not by friends but by accomplices, depraved and vicious creatures or blind and brutal instruments. These include the utterly unscrupulous Amann, director of Eher Publications, publishers of the

Völkischer Beobachter; Hofmann, who owes his fortune to the sale of his daughter; Emile Maurice, ex-chauffeur and now a Groupleader in the Black Guards and one of the killers in the monster's service on the night of June 30. Perhaps the most despicable of Hitler's underlings is Christian Weber, a pimp who worked as chucker-out at Donisl's, a disreputable Munich dive. This is the man whom Hitler receives and consults daily, the one man besides Hofmann who can go in to him without being announced. There is a photograph of this ape-like creature meeting Hitler at the Munich air-field; it is horrifying. He serves the master of Germany with the same muscular strength and the same unscrupulousness that he devoted to his work at Donisl's. Schaub, Schreck and Brückner, former petty police officials, less vile than the foregoing, are impersonal extras in this gang of crooks.

The privilege of addressing Hitler in the second person singular is reserved to this small group of intimates. They and a few friends call Hitler 'Adi', slap him on the back and even dare to tell smutty stories in front of him. Hitler enjoys their company, for they confirm his profound conviction that man is essentially vile.

From this conviction he will never depart. It is typical of him that, though reading tires and bores him, he is thoroughly familiar with Machiavelli and with the *Anti-Machiavelli* of Frederick the Great. He is a fervent admirer of the Florentine, whom he uses to defend and justify his own crimes and treachery.

I discussed Machiavelli with him one day when he

came to lunch at my parents' home at Dinkelsbühl, in Franconia, the little town where my mother was born and where the family settled when my father retired.

Machiavelli, so I was convinced and so I tried to explain to him, lived in an age when religion and politics were identified. The principles of good and evil were mercilessly opposed. It was not the same today. Religion belonged to the divine, politics essentially to the human sphere. Man was both good and evil.

'Man is congenitally evil,' replied Hitler. 'He can only be controlled by force. To govern him everything is permissible. You must lie, betray, even kill when policy demands it.'

'Murder and treachery may be permissible in politics, I grant you; but what would happen to you if man were, as you say, fundamentally evil? Wouldn't you long ago have been betrayed and murdered?'

He cut short the discussion, as he always does when he is out of his depth, and said simply:

'That morality is only valid for men born to command. It gives them the right to act as masters.'

What joy can a man like Hitler find in life? He loves no one. He does not even enjoy nature, and his eyes see nothing of its beauty. He rarely smiles, and is denied the gift of humour, that divine gift that enables men to laugh even at themselves. Sir Nevile Henderson, in the White Paper, confesses that he was struck by the Nazi leaders' lack of humour. They

treat themselves with appalling seriousness; in fact their gravity is animal-like.

Nor is that all. We have already seen that Hitler is afraid of logic. Like a woman, he evades the issue and ends by throwing in your face an argument entirely remote from what you were talking about. On the other hand, give him a vague and nebulous generalization and he is in his element. But he is incapable of thinking anything to its logical conclusion.

'The collective good before the individual good.' Is not that one of his favourite slogans, and does it not imply the construction of a new social order?

Yes, but the sleep-walker has no desire to see clearly. Systematic thinking, and above all criticism, are hateful to him. He has no ideas, and no true ideals. He advances blindly, guided by that extraordinary flair which has made him what he is. He hates intelligence, and he is tormented by the sense of his own inferiority. Like Himmelstoss, the subaltern in *All Quiet on the Western Front*, he is in rebellion against the things of the mind.

In his speeches words such as hate, destruction, fanaticism constantly recur; but one searches vainly for words such as love, cultivate, sprout, bud, grow. He is the slave of technique and seems to have no conception of organic evolution.

The miracle of creation, the mystery of birth are unknown to him. He has never had children, nor the hope of them. The privilege of creating the simplest and most beautiful thing in the world was denied him.

What does he know of life?

Roses covered with dew; a calf frisking on uncertain legs; a child's mischievous laughter; the love of a woman; the sight of a field of golden corn rippling in the sunlight; the sadness of one of Verlaine's November days; the silence of snow-covered forests and frost-gripped streams; the sound of bells calling the faithful to prayer; to all these gifts of the Creator he is blind and deaf.

Woe to a people without morality, a world without love, an age without God.

But since Hitler had a mission, since he was not just a man but an instrument of history, could he have been different? Did he not have to have the face of Lucifer, the tongue with which Mephistopheles spoke in order to seduce Faust? Goethe's Mephistopheles only said what Faust felt, thought, wanted, just as Hitler only says what the German people feel, think, want.

But there were two men in Faust, and Mephistopheles made himself the spokesman only of his base instincts and brutal desires, just as Hitler is the mouthpiece of a violent Germany dominated by negation and the destructive principle.

All men and all nations are composite of vice and virtue. Faust freed himself from Mephistopheles. Germany will free herself from Hitler.

CHAPTER VI

HITLERISM VERSUS STRASSERISM

After my first meeting with Hitler nothing that Gregor could say had persuaded me to join the Party.

When occasion arose I gave my brother advice. I observed at close quarters the progress and the backslidings of the Nazi leaders. I felt that the National-Socialist idea was the only thing that could regenerate my country, but I refused to collaborate openly with men of whom Adolf Hitler was the undisputed leader. I had seen him at work, and had formed my judgment.

But in 1925 the situation took on a new aspect. Hitler, released from prison, resumed his leadership of the movement in South Germany. The North, however, was partly closed to him. He was banned from speaking in any of the Prussian provinces.

Hitler was aware of Gregor's organizing ability, his popularity with the workers and his fundamental honesty. He asked him to take charge of the National-Socialist movement in North Germany, and offered him complete freedom of action.

Once more my brother asked me to help him. In these circumstances I consented, and in the spring of 1925 I became a member of the Party.

During Hitler's imprisonment I had contributed to

the *Völkischer Beobachter*, under the pseudonym of Ulrich von Hutten, and had to some extent laid in that journal the foundations of our National-Socialist theories. For the first time Strasserism ventured to oppose Hitlerism. But the liberation of the Nazi leader put an end to the opening phase of this conflict, and I felt ready to support Gregor and to prepare the way for the victory of our ideas.

Collaboration with Graefe had had to be abandoned. Graefe was even more reactionary than Hitler, and on regaining his liberty he and his followers dissociated themselves from us and pursued their activities independently. Ludendorff, however, was in perfect agreement with Gregor, and the great work could begin. Our immediate task was to find a solid political and intellectual foundation on which to build the organization of the National-Socialist Party of the North.

Hitler, whether because he failed to realize the gulf that even then divided me from him or because he regarded my collaboration as a necessary evil, heartily congratulated Gregor on learning that I had been won over.

'Whatever he does, he'll do well,' he assured my brother. 'Two men like you cannot fail.'

Our task in North Germany was hard but full of interest. The scattered Party members had to be regrouped, and they had to be offered an intelligent Press, adapted to their mentality as well as to our own ideas.

We first founded a fortnightly review intended only for party officials. We called it the *Nationalsozialistische Briefe.*

Our second step was to work out an economic, political and cultural programme. In the economic field it was opposed alike to Marxism and capitalism. We foresaw a new equilibrium on a basis of state feudalism. The State was to be the sole owner of the land, which it would lease to private citizens. All were to be free to do as they liked with their own land, but no one could sell or sub-let state property. In this way we hoped to combat proletarianization and to restore a sense of liberty to our fellow-citizens. No man is free who is not economically independent.

We proposed nationalization only of such wealth as could not be multiplied at will, i.e. the country's landed and industrial inheritance.

In the political field we rejected the totalitarian idea in favour of federalism. Parliament, instead of consisting of party representatives, would consist of representatives of corporations. These we divided into five groups; workers, peasants, clerks and officials, industrialists, and the liberal professions. Politically Germany would be decentralized and divided into cantons on the Swiss model. Prussia, separated from the Rhineland, from Hesse, Hanover, Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein, would lose her hegemony and cease to exist. The administration of each canton, from the governor to the humblest porter, would be exclusively in the hands of natives of the canton.

The prosperity of the country would be assured by the nationalization of heavy industry and the distribution of the great estates as state fiefs.

Our programme foresaw the destruction of Prussian militarism. Under a new Constitution there would be either a small professional army or a militia on Swiss lines.

In the field of foreign politics we naturally demanded equality between the nations, and the cessation of the ostracism of Germany that still prevailed. We had no territorial demands, looking forward at most to the holding of honest plebiscites in disputed areas.

A European federation, based on the same principles as those of federal Germany, would lead to a disarmed Europe, forming a solid bloc in which each country retained its own administration, customs and religion. The abolition of tariff walls would create a kind of European *Autarkie*, with Free Trade prevailing throughout the Continent. This would be as desirable in the economic as in the cultural field.

The war of 1914 was the result of the progressive disintegration of the old economic and cultural principles. Reconstruction, to our minds, could only be brought about on the basis of a new order which would re-establish harmony between capital and labour and between the individual and the community. The word 'harmony' excluded any idea of dictatorship. There would be no dictatorship, either of class or of race.

Harmony, too, had to be re-established between men

and God, between the people and religion; the psychological problems which since the beginning of the century had been created by materialism, the deification of technique, had resulted in the profoundest demoralization.

In short, harmony in every field was our primary and fundamental aim, for harmony permitted unity in diversity and was the enemy of standardization.

I had many times tried to convince Hitler of this, but the idea was too foreign to his mentality. To him harmony meant uniformity, columns of men and women marching in goose-step, giving the same salute and shouting the same words.

Gregor was not able to bring his adjutant, Heinrich Himmler, to Berlin. The latter replaced him at Landshut, where my brother returned from time to time to maintain contact with his men and to keep an eye on his pharmacy.

For some time Gregor and I had been struck by the gifts of a young Rhinelander, Josef Goebbels, secretary to the deputy Wiegershaus, a leading member of Graefe's party. With his unpleasant features and his club foot, Goebbels' appearance could certainly not be called prepossessing. But he was an extremely gifted speaker and had a flair for propaganda. We saw him at work and heard his passionate denunciations of the Nazi Party, and we realized that he would

make an invaluable ally. Gregor, who had transferred the scene of his operations to the Ruhr, where our fortnightly was published, entered into negotiations with him. To bribe Josef Goebbels was an easy task. For two hundred marks a month the young man agreed to become editor of the *Nationalsozialistische Briefe* and my brother's private secretary.

Goebbels' aspirations appeared to have been realized beyond his wildest dreams. The unsuccessful journalist who had vainly peddled his articles round the German Press, the author who had been utterly unable to find a publisher, was now about to get his own back. Karl Kaufmann, *Gauleiter* of the Ruhr (now Governor of Hamburg), and Erich Koch, chief of the Ebersfeld district, where our periodical appeared, agreed to his appointment.

We soon realized that our new acquisition was by no means without its disadvantages. Goebbels was ambitious, an opportunist and a liar. To hear him, one would have supposed he had been a heroic figure in the Ruhr struggle, where he gave the impression that he had been imprisoned by the French and flogged daily in his cell. As we already had some doubts about his veracity, I caused inquiries to be made, and established the fact that he had never spent a day in prison in his life and that his story was a fabrication from beginning to end.

Another of his frauds was to ante-date his Party membership card. *Gauleiter* Kaufmann, when he discovered this, set afoot a second inquiry which

resulted in the utter confusion of the imposter. But by this time Josef Goebbels had already betrayed and left us.

Meanwhile he carried on his duties in the National-Socialist Party with all the zeal of a neophyte.

When all was in readiness Gregor called a meeting of the regional leaders of Hanover under our joint presidency. The *Gauleiters* of the North answered his call; Kaufmann, Rust, now Reich Minister of Education; Kerrl, present Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs; Ley, leader of the Labour Front, and Hildebrandt, the present Governor of Mecklenburg. There were about twenty-four of us, and our number was completed by Gottfried Feder, Hitler's deputy.

When the northern leaders learned that Hitler proposed to be represented at Hanover there was great indignation.

'No spies in our midst!' exclaimed Goebbels, always more royalist than the king.

The motion that Feder should be admitted to the meeting was put to the vote and passed by a bare majority.

A problem of the greatest importance was raised at this conference.

The whole country was divided on the question of the expropriation of the German royal houses.

The inflation period was fortunately over, and the mark had been stabilized, but War Loan subscribers could not be repaid and the small *rentiers* were not drawing a farthing. In these circumstances was it not

immoral to restore to the princes, the men responsible for the war and its consequences, their castles, their lands and something like a hundred million gold marks? The working-class parties and the German democrats were violently opposed to the measure, and the National-Socialist Party of the North seemed equally opposed. In anticipation of this first German plebiscite our leaders were anxious to pass a resolution on the subject, and Feder's presence was embarrassing. Daily reports from Bavaria told us which way Adolf was moving, and we were perfectly well aware that a National-Socialist vote in favour of expropriation would be at complete variance with his new tactics.

At Hanover everyone except Dr. Ley voted for it. When Feder protested in Hitler's name Goebbels leapt to his feet and made a passionate speech in our support.

'In these circumstances I demand that the petty bourgeois Adolf Hitler be expelled from the National-Socialist Party,' he thundered. I may add that he was loudly applauded.

Gregor had to intervene firmly and point out that such a decision could only be taken by a general Party Congress. In any case it was agreed that the National-Socialist Party of the North would vote against the princes.

'The National-Socialists are free and democratic men,' Rust ardently declared. 'They have no pope who can claim infallibility. Hitler can act as he likes, but we shall act according to our conscience.'

Similar incidents occurred in the Democratic Party. Dr. Schacht, Reichstag deputy and member of the Party executive, came out in opposition to the majority and in favour of the princes and handed in his resignation. This was the first occasion on which Hitler and Schacht found themselves in agreement, and a basis was thus laid for future understandings.

Moreover the Hanover Congress accepted the 'Strasser programme', and resolved to substitute it for the Twenty-Five Points of Hitler's National-Socialist Party. It was open dissidence.

In order to extend our activities we decided to found in Berlin the Kampfverlag (Combat Publications) and to establish several new journals. I assumed control of our publications. In the whole of North Germany only Dr. Ley's paper, and hence his district of Cologne, remained pro-Hitler.

To understand Hitler's fury it was necessary to have followed his recent change of front. Hitler had become conservative. He needed money for his party, and this could only come from the capitalists. The expropriation of the princes would obviously alarm the big industrialists, the financiers and the landowners, who would naturally regard the breaking-up of the property of the former reigning houses as the first step towards similar measures directed against themselves.

The reply to the Hanover resolution was not long in coming. Adolf, faithful to his tactics of fraud and violence, also summoned a regional conference, but under peculiar conditions. Knowing that most of us

were tied down by our jobs, he was careful not to choose a Sunday. He summoned to Bamberg not only the Southern district leaders but also the sub-leaders, in order to amass more votes, and to ensure victory he mobilized the S.A. But there is no need to-day to explain what Adolf Hitler means by liberty of opinion and how he behaves when he pretends to consult his associates, his rivals or the voice of the people. His methods have scarcely changed, as Europe has since learned to its cost.

Hitler had long since decided to make the position of *Gauleiter* a salaried one, and thus turn the Southern leaders, who should have been his collaborators and advisers, into nothing more or less than his hired underlings.

Among our number there was hardly anyone who had the time or the means to travel to Bamberg. Only Gregor, as a Reichstag Deputy, had a free pass on the German railways. For support he took with him that ardent apostle of our cause, Josef Goebbels.

This was in February, 1926, about three months after our Hanover conference. Adolf made a brilliant plea for the princes and the claims of their aristocratic families. Goebbels had had time to make contact with the officials of the Bavarian Nazi Party. The number of cars at the disposal of Hitler's associates did not fail to impress him, and he compared his own modest way of living with the luxury already enjoyed by the Streichers, the Essers and the Webers. His choice was made even before the meeting started.

As soon as Hitler had finished, Josef Goebbels, spokesman of the National-Socialist Party of the North and Gregor Strasser's private secretary, rose to his feet.

'Herr Adolf Hitler is right,' he declared (the word 'Führer' had not yet been introduced into the Nazi vocabulary). 'His arguments are so convincing that there is no disgrace in admitting our mistakes and rejoining him.'

No one in the Party has forgotten Goebbels' unspeakable conduct. Veterans talk of 'the traitor of Bamberg' to this day.

Hitler seemed to have anticipated the little cripple's *volte-face*, and to have decided that Gregor Strasser, separated from his associates, isolated in a hostile congress and facing a bitter defeat, would be in no position to resist him.

A battle-royal between Adolf and Gregor inevitably ensued next day. So terrific was the debate between them that at times Gregor felt it was more like hand-to-hand fighting.

'I defended our position vigorously,' he told me, 'but I could feel that Adolf was gaining ground. He was rarely violent, but he called on all the generosity and all the arts of seduction of which he is master. Once or twice he came close to me, and I thought he was going to seize me by the throat, but instead he put his arm round my shoulders and talked to me like a friend. "Listen, Strasser", he said, "you really mustn't go on living like a wretched official. Sell your

pharmacy, draw on the Party funds and set yourself up properly as a man of your worth should."'

I listened to Gregor's story with growing misgivings, knowing only too well which way Adolf Hitler was going. He was trying to turn Gregor into a docile instrument like the rest, a slave of the funds that he had amassed.

The compromise that resulted from this oratorical clash between Hitler and Gregor was not entirely disastrous to us. We retained our independence, the right to run our publishing house and to publish the *Nationalsozialistische Briefe*. On the other hand we had to renounce our programme and adhere once more to Hitler's Twenty-Five Points.

'Above all,' I counselled Gregor, 'keep your pharmacy and don't take any of his money.'

I was then acting as legal adviser to a big industrial concern. By resigning my post I was able to draw a handsome bonus, and with this money we founded the Kampfverlag and acquired first six and then eight periodicals, which we later converted into dailies.

The struggle was resumed with increased vigour. Our ideas were forcefully expounded in the papers which I edited, and our democratic organization opposed the increasingly capitalist tendencies of the National-Socialist Party of the South. Eventually we even rivalled them commercially, for between 1926 and 1930 the Kampfverlag went from strength to strength and overshadowed the resourceful Amann's Eher Verlag.

In 1928, while living with my parents at Dinkelsbühl, I made a loyal attempt to call a halt by the complete airing of our views. Adolf replied by advocating Machiavellism.

Meanwhile Hermann Goering had returned from his long stay in Italy and Sweden. He began to intrigue for a seat in Parliament, and did not hesitate to bring the most unscrupulous pressure to bear upon his old comrade-in-arms Hitler.

'Either I become a deputy,' he said, 'or I bring an action against the Party for damages and interest for the wound I received on November 9.'

Did Adolf allow himself to be intimidated?

I think not. Gregor, more credulous than I, said to me one day:

'You know Koch has been thrown out? Goering is to have the seat. The swine has blackmailed Hitler.'

I saw further than Gregor, and could imagine the use Hitler could make of Goering, an ex-officer with excellent connections among the big industrialists. Without him Hitler would undoubtedly have had to make do with such second-rate capitalists as had already gravitated within his orbit. But through Hermann Goering he established contact with the celebrated industrialist Thyssen, with Kirdorf, who managed the secret funds of heavy industry, and eventually with the financial wizard Schacht. Life in

the grand manner was opening out before Hitler. The munitions that he expended upon us were made of good, hard cash.

I went several times to Munich and had many interviews with Hitler, but these grew more and more stormy as time went on. It was in 1928, at his home, that I made the acquaintance of Gely Raubal, but this young woman played no part in the rooted antagonism between us.

Meanwhile Himmler, seduced by the prospect of commanding the S.S. shock troops, or Black Guards, whom Hitler had just founded for his own purposes, had ceased working for my brother and had gone over to Adolf.

We fought back as best we could. Our propaganda was admirably organized. The speeches of Kaufmann, Koch, Stöhr, Schopke, Franzen and Groh were warmly applauded throughout Northern Germany and vigorously reported in our Press. We succeeded in winning Saxony, but Thuringia fell to Hitler. Thanks to his new and powerful friends, the ban on his making public speeches, which had seriously handicapped him, was lifted in certain places, notably Bremen, Anhalt and Oldenburg. The prospect of a reconciliation between the parties of North and South grew increasingly remote.

As a result of the situation in the years 1928 and 1929, relations between Gregor and myself began to be a little strained. When Gregor came to Berlin he generally stayed with me, and we would spend the

night in endless and futile argument. Even poor Else, my sister-in-law, in spite of her instinctive mistrust of Hitler, dreamed of having a car like the wives of other high Party officials in Bavaria. Gregor had more solid arguments to justify his obstinacy.

I reminded him of Hitler's successive acts of treachery.

'We no longer talk the same language,' I said. 'We are socialists, and Hitler has already come to terms with the capitalists. We are republicans, and Hitler allies himself with the Wittelsbachs and even with the Hohenzollerns. We are European and liberal; we demand our liberty but we also respect the liberty of others, while Hitler talks to his confidants of the domination of Europe. We are Christians; without Christianity Europe is lost. Hitler is an atheist.'

Gregor listened to me gravely, his brows contracted in a frown.

'No!' he exclaimed. 'I won't allow myself to be unhorsed. I shall tame him.'

Did Gregor really believe he would tame Adolf? Was he not bound to him by one of those obstinate fidelities that nothing could shake?

'You won't tame him, Gregor. The horse won't unseat you; he'll drag you with him on his ruinous career. You have lost the reins. You must take the risk while there's still time, and abandon your mount. Gregor, we must part from him.'

But Gregor said no.

CHAPTER VII

OPEN COMBAT

WHETHER his tactics were Machiavellian or merely Hitlerian, the fact remains that Adolf appointed Goebbels *Gauleiter* of Berlin. The result of this brilliant stroke was that Gregor's former private secretary assumed a degree of authority over us. He was able to obstruct our activities, and the S.A., now financed throughout Germany by Hitler, were at his disposal.

In July, 1927, he founded in Berlin a daily, *Der Angriff*, designed to compete with our *Arbeitsblatt*, which had been appearing since 1926. Naturally our new *Gauleiter* missed no opportunity of manhandling our supporters and having our sellers arrested. He even arranged that the times of meetings organized under his jurisdiction should be withheld from us, with the result that would-be well-informed Party members gave up the *Arbeitsblatt* in favour of the *Angriff*. Several times Gregor and I wrote to Hitler to protest against the abominable conduct of his new favourite. But Adolf was an expert at hedging. 'Your paper is certainly the official Party organ in Berlin,' he replied, 'but I can't stop Goebbels from running a private sheet of his own.' One might ask how the organ of the *Gauleiter* of the capital could be a private sheet.

As the months passed Goebbels organized a miniature terror, a guerrilla warfare against our supporters. One after another our associates fell under the ban of his displeasure, and stormtroopers disguised as hooligans were set to trail our friends in the street and beat them up; he even made several attempts to get hold of me, though without success. When we demanded daylight on these nocturnal attacks we received the invariable reply: 'The Communists are after you. Get the S.A. to protect you.' In other words, 'Admit spies to your ranks and we shall leave you in peace'.

Most of my associates settled in suburbs of Berlin belonging to the political district of Brandenburg, whose *Gauleiter* was absolutely pro-Strasser. I had to hold the fort in Berlin itself.

One morning in the spring of 1928 I was at work in my enormous study, a thirty-foot long apartment where Gregor and I used to work at two desks face-to-face. I was alone, examining the layout of our periodical, when Hitler burst in unannounced. I did not even know he was in Berlin.

Without a word of greeting he made for Gregor's desk, sat down and announced point-blank:

'This can't go on.'

'What can't go on, Herr Hitler?'

'Your incessant quarrels with my people. Last year it was Streicher, then it was Rosenberg, and now it's Goebbels. I've had enough of it.'

'There is no connection between them, Herr Hitler. Julius Streicher is a dirty swine. At the Nurnberg

Congress last year he served me up with Jewish sexual crimes as a "delicate apéritif". I told him I considered his paper disgusting and that I liked literature, not pornography. In fact we had quite a violent quarrel, which, in view of its subject, should neither shock nor surprise you.'

'And Rosenberg?' asked Hitler, discountenanced by the word 'pornography'. 'What have you got against him?'

'His paganism, Herr Hitler.'

Adolf rose and began to pace the room.

'Rosenberg's ideology is an integral part of National-Socialism', he solemnly declared.

'I thought you had made peace with Rome.'

Hitler stopped and looked me in the eyes.

'Christianity is, for the moment, one of the points in the programme I have laid down. But we must look ahead. Rosenberg is a forerunner, a prophet. His theories are the expression of the German soul. A true German cannot condemn them.'

I made no answer, but stared at the man. I was genuinely taken aback by his duplicity.

He made a gesture as though to wipe out what he had said.

'Let's get down to brass-tacks. It's the Goebbels business that I've come about. I tell you again, it can't go on.'

'Quite so. But you should tell that to Goebbels. He came here after I did, and he founded his paper after mine. I am within my rights.'

Hitler gave a dry little laugh.

'It's not a question of right but of might. What wil you do when ten of Herr Goebbels' stormtrooper attack you in your office?'

I slowly took my big revolver from my drawer anc placed it beside me.

'I have eight rounds, Herr Hitler. That will b(eight stormtroopers less.'

Hitler stiffened.

'I know you are mad enough to shoot,' he barked. 'I know that you would not hesitate to defend yourself. But nevertheless you can't kill my stormtroopers.'

'Yours, or Herr Goebbels'?' If they are yours, I advise you not to send them. If they are Herr Goebbels', it's up to you to stop them from coming. As for me, I shall shoot anyone who attacks me. I don't give a damn for their uniform. Brown shirts can't frighten me.'

'Otto,' said Hitler suddenly, for the first and last time calling me by my Christian name, 'Be reasonable. Think it over, for your brother's sake.' He had seized my hands.

I remained unmoved. The tearful eyes, the trembling voice, the whole studied performance was wasted on me.

'You think it over, Herr Hitler. I'll do the same.'

By the time he left I had decided to fight his hypocrisy openly; in short, either to beat him or to break with him.

The process was a lengthy one. I was so deeply

attached to Gregor that the prospect of breaking with him too held me back more than once.

At first I followed my brother's advice, and, like my friends, took up my residence at Lenitz, a Berlin suburb belonging to the district of Brandenburg, and transferred the press there. The *Arbeitsblatt* remained the official journal of the North. My contributors, with my approval, discussed, criticized, and condemned without reservation the conduct of certain regional leaders of the South. Count Reventlow was among my most ardent followers.

Amann, director of our rival publications, systematically incited the Führer against us. I did not complain. Sooner or later the ulcer would have to be opened.

In 1929, when I was summoned to Munich, Hitler, prior to informing me that 'he could not be wrong, for what he did was historical', offered to buy my Kampfverlag. I refused point-blank. I was determined to remain in the Party only for so long as I could honestly fight for what I considered right. Deprived of the direction of the Press, I should become, like so many others, a hireling of the man whom the sycophants of the South had started calling the Führer.

In 1930 the tension had reached breaking-point. In April the trade unions of Saxony declared an industrial strike. I decided to support it with the full weight of the National-Socialist Party of the North, and to put my papers at the disposal of the cause. The *Sächsischer Beobachter*, one of my journals, was heart and

soul behind the strikers. It is easy to imagine the fury of the pundits of industry with whom Hitler had recently come to terms. For some time the S.A. had only been financed thanks to the donations of Thyssen and his fellows; the Reichswehr had resolutely turned its back upon them, and now reserved its favours for the extreme Right formation of the Stahlhelm.

Without his new friends Hitler could count himself lost, and he received from the Federation of Industrialists of Saxony an ultimatum couched in rather abrupt terms:

'Unless the strike order is condemned and opposed by the National-Socialist Party and its papers, notably the *Sächsischer Beobachter*, the entire Reich Federation of Industrialists will cease its payments to the Party.'

Such an insult to the Party could not remain secret. We knew the contents of this shameful ultimatum, we knew that Hitler was sold to the capitalists, and we realized that there was nothing more to hope from him; for he accepted the ultimatum.

A resolution of the Reich Party Executive forbade any member of the National-Socialist Party to take part in the strike. It was signed by Adolf Hitler himself.

The cowardly Mutschmann, *Gauleiter* of Saxony, managed to have the decision carried by a bare majority, and Saxony had to be written off as a gain to Hitler. I and a few friends, disgusted by the cowardice of some and the treachery of others, refused to submit. We continued to support the strikers in our

papers, and we attacked Hitler's conduct and associates with a hitherto undreamed-of violence.

Among the methods favoured by Hitler the element of surprise plays an important part.

At a quarter to one on May 21, 1930, just as I was leaving for my office in Oranienburg, I was called to the telephone.

'Hullo! Rudolph Hess speaking. Herr Hitler asks you to be good enough to come at once to the Hotel Sansouci for an urgent discussion.'

Adolf's visit to Berlin had been kept secret. This time he did not come and surprise me in my office. He summoned me to an interview which I knew to be decisive.

The sooner the better, I thought, and answered the summons without delay.

Adolf received me in the lounge of the hotel. We were alone. He offered me a chair and took a seat facing me.

'Have you thought over my proposition of last year?' he asked. 'Amann has given me a very enthusiastic report on your publishing house. I'm ready to buy it from you. You, Gregor and Hinkel will receive sixty thousand marks each, and you and Hinkel will be made deputies.'

'That is hardly the question, Herr Hitler. My refusal at Munich still holds good.'

Hitler immediately began to deluge me with abuse.

'The tone of your papers is a public disgrace. Your articles infringe the elementary laws of discipline.

They are an insult to the Party programme. My patience is exhausted. The Kampfverlag will go into voluntary liquidation. If you refuse your consent I shall proceed against you with all the means in my power.'

I stood up.

'I thought, Herr Hitler, that you had sent for me for an interview that might clarify the situation. I am quite prepared to talk things over, but I refuse to accept an ultimatum.'

'Naturally I should like to come to some arrangement,' said Hitler, a little more mildly. 'I don't want the Party to lose a man of your worth. That's why I asked you to come here. You are young, you are an ex-soldier, you are one of us veteran National-Socialists, and it seems to me you should still be capable of learning and understanding. I can't say as much for Reventlow. He's an old man, and a journalist into the bargain, incapable of changing his ingrained ideas. He's a hopeless case; but you . . .'

Hitler was adopting his classic manœuvre of isolating his opponent.

'Your complaints are rather vague, Herr Hitler. I can only say that the articles of the last few weeks were written by members of the official National-Socialist Press, and that every one of them had my entire approval. I may say that I am delighted at having the opportunity of explaining my position to you.'

The conversation that ensued lasted exactly seven

hours; we had to break off and resume next day. I dictated a record of this final duel immediately afterwards and gave it to my friends. The reproduction of my notes in their entirety would be outside the scope of this book and would lead me down the tedious by-ways of German domestic politics. I shall only attempt to reproduce here the essential parts of our conversation, those which cast some light on the man whom I was challenging and throw into relief the fundamental cause of our rupture.

Hitler, as usual, paced up and down the room.

'The article in the *Nationalsozialistische Briefe* is a stab in the back of our National-Socialist Prime Minister, Dr. Frick,' he said. 'As for Schulze-Naumburg, he is an artist of the first rank. Everyone who knows anything about art realizes that he is the man above all others to teach true German art. But you join with the Jewish Press in sabotaging the decisions of the National-Socialist Minister on this question.'

'The *Nationalsozialistische Briefe* merely stands up for the young Party artists of the Wendland group. We want to save these young men from being left out in the cold for the benefit of hoary prophets.'

Schulze-Naumberg was a bearded fanatic, one of those massive and prehistoric Teutons in whom Hitler doubtless saw the incarnation of the soul of our people.

'You haven't the slightest idea of what art is, Herr Strasser. The old art, the new art simply don't exist. There is only one kind of art, and that is Greco-Nordic. There can be no such thing as a revolution

in art. There's no such thing as Italian, Dutch or German art, and to talk of Gothic art would be madness. Anything worthy of the name of art can only be Greco-Nordic.'

I replied that, without professing to be an expert on such matters, I considered art to be the expression of the soul of a people and believed it underwent diverse influences. I drew his attention to the art of the Chinese and the Egyptians.

'You are talking stale liberalism,' said Hitler. 'I repeat, there is no such art. Neither the Chinese nor the Egyptians were homogeneous peoples. Their bodies were those of inferior races; it was the Nordic head on them that was responsible for all their masterpieces.'

I was burning to bring the conversation back to the political questions that preoccupied me. When I made no reply to his strange art theories, Adolf went on, as I hoped he would, to talk of Blank's article on 'Loyalty and Disloyalty'.

'How do you justify Blank's theories?' he demanded. 'His conception of loyalty, the distinction he makes between the Leader and the Idea, are incitements to Party members to rebel.'

'No,' I said, 'it is not a question of diminishing the Leader's prestige. But for the free and protestant German the service of the Idea first and foremost is an ingrained necessity. The Idea is divine in origin, while men are only its vehicles, the body in which the Word is made flesh. The Leader is made to serve the Idea,

and it is to the Idea alone that we owe absolute allegiance. The Leader is human, and it is human to err.'

'You are talking monumental idiocy. You wish to give Party members the right to decide whether or not the Führer has remained faithful to the so-called Idea. It's the lowest kind of democracy, and we want nothing to do with it! For us the Idea is the Führer, and each Party member has only to obey the Führer.'

'No,' I replied. 'What you say is all very well for the Roman Church, from which, incidentally, Italian Fascism took its inspiration. But I maintain that for Germany the Idea is the decisive thing, and that the individual conscience should be called upon to decide if there is any divergence between the Idea and the Leader.'

'On that point we disagree,' barked Hitler. He sat down and began rubbing his knees with a circular motion that grew quicker and quicker. 'What you say would lead to the dissolution of our organization, which is based on discipline. I have no intention of allowing our organization to be disrupted by a crazy scribbler. You have been an officer, and you see that your brother accepts my discipline, even if he doesn't always see eye-to-eye with me. Take a lesson from him; he's a fine man.'

He seized my hands, as he had done two years before. His voice was choked with sobs, and tears flowed down his cheeks.

'Discipline, Herr Hitler, is only an aid to the crea-

tion of unity in an already existing group. It cannot create that group. Don't allow yourself to be misled by the adulation and flattery of the base creatures that surround you.'

'I forbid you to insult my associates!'

'After all, Herr Hitler, we are talking as man to man. We're not at a public meeting. How many men are there among your immediate associates who are capable of independent judgment? They haven't the intelligence, let alone the character. Even my brother would be less docile if his office did not make him financially dependent upon you.'

'For the sake of your brother,' said Hitler, his eyes still moist, 'I once more offer you my hand. I have several times offered you interesting jobs in the Party. You can become my Press Chief for the whole Reich, any time you like. Come to Munich and work under my direction. I have a very high opinion of your talents and intelligence; put them in the service of the National-Socialist movement.'

'I could only accept, Herr Hitler, if we could find a basis of agreement for our divergent political views. If the understanding were only superficial, later on you would feel that I had deceived you, and I should always have the feeling that you had deceived me. If you like, I am willing to spend a month at Munich to discuss socialism and foreign policy with you and Rosenberg, whose rivalry is very obvious to me.'

'No,' said Hitler abruptly, 'it is too late. I must have a decision at once. If you don't accept I shall

begin to act on Monday. These are the measures I have decided on. The Kampfverlag will be declared an enterprise harmful to the National-Socialist Party; I shall forbid any Party member to have anything whatever to do with your papers, and I shall expel you from the Party, and your supporters with you.'

I made a superhuman effort to control myself. I was thinking, as a matter of fact, of Gregor, whom a final rupture with Adolf would separate from me.

'All that is very simple for you, Herr Hitler, but it only serves to emphasize the profound difference in our revolutionary and socialist ideas. The reasons you give for destroying the Kampfverlag I take to be only pretexts. The real reason is that you want to strangle the social revolution for the sake of legality and your new collaboration with the bourgeois parties of the Right.'

At this Hitler grew violent.

'I am a socialist, and a very different kind of socialist from your rich friend Reventlow. I was once an ordinary working-man. I would not allow my chauffeur to eat worse than I eat myself. But your kind of socialism is nothing but Marxism. The mass of the working classes want nothing but bread and games. They will never understand the meaning of an ideal, and we cannot hope to win them over to one. What we have to do is to select from a new master-class men who will not allow themselves to be guided, like you, by the morality of pity. Those who rule must know that they have the right to rule because they belong to

a superior race. They must maintain that right and ruthlessly consolidate it.'

I was dumbfounded at these words, and told Hitler so openly.

'Your racial ideas,' I added, 'which you owe to Herr Rosenberg, are not only a flagrant contradiction of the great mission of National-Socialism, which should be the creation of a German nation; they are calculated to bring about the disintegration of the German people.'

Hitler continued as though he were addressing a public meeting.

'What you preach is liberalism, nothing but liberalism. There is only one possible kind of revolution, and it is not economic, or political, or social, but racial, and it will always be the same; the struggle of inferior classes and inferior races against the superior races who are in the saddle. On the day the superior race forgets this law, it is lost. All revolutions — and I have studied them carefully — have been racial. When you read Rosenberg's new book[1] you will understand these things, for it is the most powerful book of its kind, greater even than Houston Chamberlain's *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*. Your ideas of foreign policy are false because you have no racial knowledge. Didn't you declare openly for the Indian independence movement when it was obviously a rebellion of the inferior Hindu race against the valorous Anglo-Nordic? The Nordic race has the right to dominate the world, and that right will be the guiding

[1] *The Myth of the Twentieth Century.*

principle of our foreign policy. That is why any alliance with Russia, a Slav-Tatar body surmounted by a Jewish head, is out of the question. I knew those Slavs in my own country! When a German head dominated them Germany could make common cause with them, as it did in Bismarck's time. To-day it would be a crime.'

'But, Herr Hitler, such ideas can never be the basis of a foreign policy. For me the only problem that counts is whether the political constellation is favourable or unfavourable to Germany. We cannot let ourselves be guided by considerations of sympathy or antipathy. One of the principal aims of German foreign policy will have to be, as I have told you before, the abolition of the Treaty of Versailles. Stalin, Mussolini, MacDonald, Poincaré, what does it matter? A good German politician must put the good of Germany first.'

'Certainly,' Hitler agreed, 'the good of Germany must come first. That is why an understanding with England is indispensable. We must establish Germano-Nordic domination over Europe, and then, with the cooperation of America, over the world . . . The land for us, the seas for England . . .'

We had not yet reached the crucial point of our discussion. I took out my watch; it was ten past four. Hitler, suddenly exhausted, had flung himself into a chair, panting like a spent runner.

'Couldn't we continue our conversation to-morrow morning?' I asked. 'Foreign policy is still only a

theoretical matter for us, there are no decisions to be made yet. The formula of the good of Germany, upon which we are agreed, is enough for the moment. Cultural problems are of only secondary importance to me. The burning question is that of the economic and social order. I am not satisfied that the policy of the Party is sound on this question, and I have some grave criticisms to make.'

Hitler held out his hand. For the third time his eyes filled with tears.

'To-morrow, at ten o'clock.'

The same evening I described this conversation to my friends, Richard Schapke, Günther Kübler, Herbert Blank and Paul Brinkmann, and they asked me to transcribe it for their use.

I sat up all night, making notes and preparing the chief questions which I proposed putting to Hitler next day.

Before leaving the house next morning I had a short talk with Gregor which served to establish his attitude.

Adolf Hitler was just finishing breakfast when I entered the dining-room of his hotel. He rose and asked me to follow him.

In the reading-room four men awaited us; Rudolf Hess, Amann, director of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, our colleague Hans Hinkel, and my brother Gregor.

'Herr Hitler, I expected to continue our conversation *tête-à-tête*,' I objected when I saw them. It seemed to me that if I were alone with my adversary I could more easily penetrate to his real intentions.

'These gentlemen,' he replied, 'will be very interested to hear your arguments, and mine.'

After all, it was not a bad idea to speak in front of witnesses. But the precariousness of my position was clear to me; these men were won to Hitler in advance.

Adolf invited me to speak.

'This is the question that I propose to put to you, Herr Hitler. Are you convinced, as I am, that our revolution must be a total one in the political, economic and social spheres? Do you envisage a revolution which opposes Marxism as energetically as capitalism? Do you consequently admit that our propaganda should attack both equally in order to obtain German socialism?'

Then I laid before him the points of the Strasser programme, as it had been drawn up at Hanover, and our ideas on the nationalization of industry.

'It's Marxism!' cried Hitler. 'In fact it's Bolshevism! Democracy has laid the world in ruins, and nevertheless you want to extend it to the economic sphere. It would be the end of German economy. You would wipe out all human progress, which has only been achieved by the individual efforts of great scholars and great inventors.'

'I don't believe in the progress of humanity, Herr Hitler. Men have not changed in the last thousand years. Their physique may have altered, and their conditions of life, but nothing more. Do you think that Goethe would have been happier if he had been able to ride in a motor car or Napoleon if he had been

able to broadcast? The stages of human evolution resemble those in the life of a man. A man of thirty thinks he has progressed since he was twenty; a man of forty may still nourish a similar illusion. But a man of fifty rarely talks of progress, and at sixty he has completely given it up.'

'Theory, pure theory,' Hitler replied. 'Humanity does progress, and progress is the result of the actions of great men.'

'But the rôle of these great men, these leaders, Herr Hitler, is not what you think. Men do not create or invent the great epochs of history; on the contrary they are the emissaries, the instruments of destiny.'

Adolf Hitler stiffened.

'Do you deny that I am the creator of National-Socialism?'

'I have no choice but to do so. National-Socialism is an idea born of the times in which we live. It is alive in the hearts of millions of men, and it is incarnated in you. The simultaneity with which it arose in so many minds proves its historical necessity, and proves, too, that the age of capitalism is over.'

At this Hitler launched into a long tirade in which he tried to prove to me that capitalism did not exist, that the idea of *Autarkie* was nothing but madness, that the European Nordic race must organize world commerce on a barter basis, and finally that nationalization, or socialization, as I understood it, was nothing but dilettantism, not to say Bolshevism.

Let us note that the socialization or nationalization

of property was the thirteenth point of Hitler's official programme.

'Let us assume, Herr Hitler, that you came into power to-morrow. What would you do about Krupp's? Would you leave it alone or not?'

'Of course I should leave it alone,' cried Hitler. 'Do you think me crazy enough to want to ruin Germany's great industry?'

'If you wish to preserve the capitalist régime, Herr Hitler, you have no right to talk of socialism. For our supporters are socialists, and your programme demands the socialization of private enterprise.'

'That word "socialism" is the trouble,' said Hitler. He shrugged his shoulders, appeared to reflect for a moment and then went on:

'I have never said that all enterprises should be socialized. On the contrary, I have maintained that we might socialize enterprises prejudicial to the interests of the nation. Unless they were so guilty, I should consider it a crime to destroy essential elements in our economic life. Take Italian Fascism. Our National-Socialist state, like the Fascist state, will safeguard both employers' and workers' interests while reserving the right of arbitration in case of dispute.'

'But under Fascism the problem of labour and capital remains unsolved. It has not even been tackled. It has merely been temporarily stifled. Capitalism has remained intact, just as you yourself propose to leave it intact.'

'Herr Strasser,' said Hitler, exasperated by my

answers, 'there is only one economic system, and that is responsibility and authority on the part of directors and executives. I ask Herr Amann to be responsible to me for the work of his subordinates and to exercise his authority over them. Herr Amann asks his office manager to be responsible for his typists and to exercise his authority over them; and so on to the lowest rung of the ladder. That is how it has been for thousands of years, and that is how it will always be.'

'Yes, Herr Hitler, the administrative structure will be the same whether the state is capitalist or socialist. But the spirit of labour depends on the régime under which it lives. If it was possible a few years ago for a handful of men not appreciably different from the average to throw a quarter of a million Ruhr workers on the streets, if this act was legal and in conformity with the morality of our economic system, then the system is criminal, not the men.'

'But that,' Hitler replied, looking at his watch and showing signs of acute impatience, 'that is no reason for granting the workers a share in the profits of the enterprises that employ them, and more particularly for giving them the right to be consulted. A strong State will see that production is carried on in the national interests, and, if these interests are contravened, can proceed to expropriate the enterprise concerned and take over its administration.'

'As I see it, that would change nothing, Herr Hitler. Since you are prepared, if need be, to expropriate private wealth, why make use of local authorities and

leave the responsibility to their judgment? Why risk arbitrary action on the part of men who may be misinformed? Why trust dubious informers rather than set up the right of intervention as an integral part of our economic life?'

'That,' said Hitler with a hypocritical sigh, 'is where we differ. Profit-sharing and the workers' right to be consulted are Marxist principles. I consider that the right to exercise influence on private enterprise should be conceded only to the State, directed by the superior class.'

It was half past one. Two men, Stöhr and Buch, apparently sent for by Hitler, entered at this moment. Adolf excused himself and then, without another word, conducted them to his room. Rudolf Hess followed them.

There were no raised voices that day, and no violent quarrel. But the situation was clear, and I expected Hitler to carry out his threats the same evening, or at latest next morning. However, he did nothing of the sort.

The task of settling the matter, in a fashion at once cowardly and cunning, was once more left to Goebbels.

From the beginning of June onwards my occasional contributors started being expelled from the Party. Hitler was not yet powerful enough to ban our papers or to persecute me openly, though I had reckoned

on an open letter breaking with me, or something of the sort.

When it came to Schapke's turn to be expelled for writing a violent article attacking Hitler's methods, I declared my solidarity with him and called upon Goebbels to convene a conference of Berlin Party officials.

To my great surprise, Goebbels did so. But when, on the evening of July 2, I presented myself at the entrance of the building where the meeting was in progress, an S.S. officer, with five men at his heels, informed me that, as I did not reside in the Berlin district, I could not enter the hall. Strictly he was within his rights, for meetings of this kind were limited to men of the same political district. I insisted, however, since the meeting had been called at my instigation. The officer remained adamant.

Meanwhile the meeting had begun. The building was surrounded by Black Guards.

Goebbels, at the top of his form, attempted to justify Schapke's expulsion. When he had finished Major Buchrucker, my best friend, rose and demanded the right to speak.

'I regret that I cannot permit it, since a Party inquiry has been set on foot against you.'

'Against me?' cried Buchrucker. 'I know nothing about it!'

'You will receive notification by the evening post.'

The comedy was repeated when Herbert Blank rose to speak. One hundred and seventy of the thousand

Party members present immediately rose and left the hall in protest.

Meanwhile I had been waiting in the street, and my friends had kept me informed of what had been happening inside. We went at once to Blank's home, and to Buchrucker's. No notification of any kind had arrived.

That night I saw my brother.

'Gregor, since Hitler does not dare to break openly with me, I shall break with him. To-morrow I leave the Party.'

'Very well,' said Gregor. 'I must stay.'

We said good-bye.

On July 3 I sent Hitler the following ultimatum:

'Herr Goebbels has expelled certain of my colleagues from the Party; at yesterday's meeting, on the flimsiest of pretexts, he deprived others of their right to speak. If these measures are not revoked within the next twenty-four hours I shall consider myself and my friends to have broken with the Party.'

The telegram remained unanswered.

On July 4, 1930, I had ceased to belong to the National-Socialist Party of Germany.

CHAPTER VIII

THROUGH TREASON TO POWER

On July 4, then, I once more became a free man. I brought out my papers as usual, the front page carrying the banner headline: 'Socialists Leave the Nazi Party'. I published my last interview with Hitler almost verbatim, under the sensational heading, 'A Ministerial Portfolio or the Revolution?'

Naturally all the German newspapers, with the exception of Herr Hitler's, took up the theme and embroidered it with infinite variations. The rupture was complete. It remained for me now to call the roll of my supporters and to organize my offensive.

An appeal was launched, and my papers announced the immediate formation of a 'fighting union of revolutionary National-Socialists'. Hitler and Goebbels replied with a well-orchestrated propaganda campaign. The S.A. and S.S. district leaders announced that any Nazi who associated with me or read any of my papers would be immediately expelled from the Party. Hitler's *Völkischer Beobachter* and Goebbels' *Angriff* outbid each other in slander and abuse. Hitler himself took up his pen to declare me an obscure and rootless scribbler and a parlour Bolshevik, and Goebbels asserted that I was in the pay of Moscow.

I remembered that on leaving the army I had asked

my commanding officer, now Herr Haushofer, the famous professor of 'geopolitics', to give me a military testimonial. I was anxious to have this because, as a consequence of the 1918 revolution, I had never received either the Order of Max-Joseph or the Order Pour le Mérite, for both of which I had been recommended. The testimonial mentioned all my decorations, including the Bavarian Medal of Merit, the Iron Cross of the first and second class, my wound stripes, my mentions in despatches. It also mentioned all the engagements in which I took part, and concluded with a personal appreciation by my commanding officer which stated: 'Strasser is a man who stands up for what he considers right with his whole soul and with unshakeable courage.'

I replied to my opponents' campaign of slander by publishing this document.

This first round was fought out without any hint as to the future. The situation was clarified on the evening of July 10, when I was returning to the station through the streets of Brandenburg, just outside Berlin, with my friend Brehm, a disabled ex-soldier. This was the night after the first meeting of the Black Front.

We were suddenly attacked by a number of men dressed as hooligans, and I was half-blinded by a handful of pepper which was thrown in my face. I wasted no time but leapt into the road and gained the opposite pavement. My attackers' aim was poor, for I was left with one eye open. I saw my friend stretched

in the middle of the roadway, and our assailants were preparing to make a rush at me. I drew my revolver and shouted: 'The first man who moves is dead!' I then advanced towards my injured friend, helped him up and backed again towards the pavement, holding him up with one hand and keeping our assailants covered with my revolver. They were armed only with knives and bludgeons.

Brehm was bleeding copiously and, with his wooden leg, it was not easy for us to get along. We resumed our way to the station as best we could, and I repeated my warning to the hooligans at the top of my voice. Passers-by disappeared as if by magic. Political brawls were common at that time, and nobody wanted to be mixed up in them.

'I know them all. They're S.A. men,' Brehm, who was a high official in that political district, whispered in my ear.

'I thought so,' I replied.

Protected by my faithful Browning, we managed to reach the station, where my friend's injuries were attended to. Next day we brought a charge against our assailants, who were sentenced to two years' imprisonment.

As the barrage of abuse hurled at me by the whole of his propaganda machine proved insufficient, Hitler resolved to ruin me. This was a task that presented no difficulties. All he had to do was to confiscate the shares which my brother and Hinkel held in the Kampfverlag, and inform me through his lawyer that

the firm would be closed down, the presses seized and the work discontinued.

I thus found myself without resources on the threshold of a new life and confronted with a colossal task.

My departure, and the reasons for it, caused great excitement in the Party. The results, however, were not very tangible. Gregor's decision to remain in the Party enabled the great majority of Strasserites to decide that they could do the same without betraying the cause. Hitler was in the ascendant. He had money behind him, and the S.A., disciplined like a proper army, had no political convictions; a uniform and implicit obedience were good enough for them.

The Party men who followed me into the wilderness were idealists, and their number was necessarily very limited. But new recruits, members of the non-Nazi paramilitary organizations of the Right, poured in upon me from the first. Such were the Stahlhelm, the Wehrwolf and the Jung Deutsche Orden.

These no longer consisted only of ex-soldiers. A new generation had grown up in search of a political ideal. The Weimar Republic was repugnant to these young people, and they had not yet been corrupted by Hitler. The news of my break with him gave them new hope.

Then there was the Peasants' Revolutionary Movement, whose leader, Claus Hein, came from Schleswig-Holstein. They were formidable country people, handy with a bomb and noted for their intrepidity. Their leader in Silesia was my friend Schapke.

I was thus able to count on a nucleus of faithful followers. My ambition, however, was not to terrorize the country or use the methods for which I condemned the Nazis. Obviously I had to be prepared to meet their attacks, but my primary object was to re-educate the socialists of Germany and make my programme and my ideas known.

At this time one of the most interesting groups, the Tatkreis ('Action Group'), sought contact with me. This was an association of intellectuals whose monthly, *Die Tat*, had a big circulation in military circles. Its leader, Dr. Zehrer, was assisted by a very eminent man, Ferdinand Fried, who is now the valuable and only aide of the Minister Herr Darré. Fried had just published a sensational book, *The Twilight of Capitalism.*

These various elements soon constituted the Black Front, an invisible but ever-present force which Hitler and his accomplices still had cause to fear even after its leader had left Germany to live in exile.

The organization of such a secret society was attended by a host of problems. We were devoid of funds, and could not count on subscriptions from any of our adherents. Each remained in his own organization, and was bound to us by sympathy alone. It was a kind of freemasonry, with ramifications in every class, caste and party of the German people. The central organization, of which I was the head, consisted of trusted friends who had broken with the Nazi Party and belonged officially to the Black Front. The

others were lost in anonymity. Hence the name Black Front, for black suggests invisibility and intangibility to the German mind.

The Black Front was to be 'the school of officers and non-commissioned officers of the German Revolution'. The emblem of official members was a tiepin embodying a hammer and a sword. For '*Heil Hitler!*' we substituted '*Heil Deutschland!*'

The periodical *Die Tat* was inadequate for our needs. We needed at least a weekly, and we issued the first number without knowing if we would have enough money to pay for the second. Our boldness, however, succeeded beyond expectations. Not only did we never run into debt, but our organ, which we first called *The German Revolution* and then simply *The Black Front*, soon had a considerable circulation. We used it to expound the principles of the regeneration of Germany, and regaled our readers with interesting sidelights on Hitler's party. In 1931 and 1932 we founded three weeklies one after another, in Berlin, Breslau and Munich itself.

I came into contact only with the leaders of the various organizations in sympathy with us. To them I distributed leaflets and pamphlets, in fact all the literature from which they could imbibe the first principles of the national regeneration at which I aimed.

We held our Black Front meetings secretly on the premises of the Tatkreis. The organization of intellectuals developed from month to month. Members

were carefully handpicked by our local leaders. Most officers and non-commissioned officers now read *Die Tat*, the circulation of which increased tenfold. At the 'Ring', as our secret meetings were called, officers rubbed shoulders with trade unionists and ardent young intellectuals. There were various degrees of membership of the Black Front, as there are in masonic lodges. There were naturally 'Rings' in all big garrison towns and all industrial centres.

Hitler, relieved of the millstone represented by the real revolutionaries among his followers, sailed full steam ahead towards the reactionary forces of the old régime. Nothing was left to stop him from contracting a close alliance with capitalism and heavy industry. From his partnership with the rich and influential he looked forward to securing the right of addressing public meetings in Berlin, and eventually, of course, to the conquest of North Germany. He also had one eye on the possibility of ousting Gregor, and he was planning an expansion of the S.A., upon whose brute force his authority in part relied. Thyssen was a harbinger, the first swallow announcing the spring. The prizes that he was really after were Hugenberg and Schacht.

Hugenberg is a curious character, a typical Prussian of the old school, heavy, intelligent, brutal, but more or less honest. He was the leader of the Pan-Germans,

the party fancied by the industrialists. Prussia had always been its nerve-centre. There is, by the way, a sensible difference between the Pan-Germans and the Greater Germans which often causes confusion abroad. The former aspire to German world domination, while the latter aimed at a reunion of the German states, possibly under some sort of federal régime, without having any imperialist ambitions.

Hugenberg was the one man in Germany who had recognized the vital importance of propaganda. During the war of 1914 he had operated the greatest propaganda machine in the world. The Scherl concern, which printed most of the journals of the Right, the official news agency, Telegraphen Union Internationale, and the Ufa company were his private property.

Winning Hugenberg would mean multiplying a thousandfold the range of the Nazi Party's propaganda, while Hugenberg for his part was seeking a contact with the German people in order to extend his personal influence. One man had his confidence, Councillor Bang of Dresden, one of the industrial leaders who had issued the ultimatum to Hitler. This man was also in contact with the Führer. The Councillor adroitly brought the two together.

Schacht and Hitler were brought together in similar fashion. Dr. Schacht had recently left the Democratic Party because of his opposition to the expropriation of the princes, and, unknown to the Party, a meeting between him and Hitler took place a little later. The diary of the first Frau Goering contains the statement:

'Hermann and I are expecting Hjalmar Schacht and Adolf Hitler to visit us to-day.' We later learned that Schacht made his co-operation with Hitler dependent upon the latter's sacrificing the Strasser brothers.

The road was thus cleared, or very nearly cleared. As a result of his refusal to accept the Young Plan, Schacht had lost his position as President of the Reichsbank. He was inordinately ambitious, and had visions of becoming Chancellor, or at least Minister of National Economy, in a government of the Right. Hjalmar Schacht vies with Franz von Papen for the title of most shameless opportunist in Germany.

The Hitler-Hugenberg-Schacht alliance was quickly cemented, and its results were soon apparent. In a few months the National-Socialist Party, which had fared disastrously at the last elections, obtained thousands of new votes. Its propaganda increased in efficiency as its programme increased in prudence. Even the most timorous dared support a movement on which Hugenberg and Schacht had set the seal of their approval. Roused by a skilfully conducted campaign, even the indifferent and apathetic went to the poll. The elections of September, 1930, were like a general mobilization, and Hitler's party won one hundred and seven seats in place of fourteen.

The impatient Adolf saw, or thought he saw, power almost within his grasp when a serious rebellion broke out among his followers.

The Black Front had made it its business to expose fully the underhand manœuvres of the Nazi leader,

and had duly denounced his venality. The blow struck home. The paramilitary organization of the Berlin S.A., enlightened by the pamphlets distributed by Black Front agents, were indignant at the revelations of Party intrigues, and a revolt against Hitler was planned by Captain Stennes.

On Good Friday, 1931, the Berlin S.A., in full uniform, with Stennes at their head, seized the building in which Goebbels lived and the *Angriff* was printed. Goebbels, who had fled, had no alternative but to call for help upon the deputy police-chief of Berlin, who was a Jew named Weiss, against whom he had written a notorious pamphlet, the 'Isidore Book'. In these circumstances Weiss was in no hurry to intervene. So Josef Goebbels courageously took the train to Munich, where he contented himself with sending his Berlin associates valiant instructions by long-distance telephone.

Stennes informed me of what had happened. 'Goebbels is in flight, but the police are on the move against us,' he said.

I immediately joined him at the *Angriff* building.

'What are we to do?' he asked me. 'The revolt was planned in agreement with Goebbels, but at the last moment he betrayed us, warned the police and fled to Munich to take refuge in Hitler's bosom.'

'A revolt which does not develop into a revolution,' I replied, 'is doomed in advance. We must hold out.'

The S.A. occupied the *Angriff* works for three days, publishing the paper on their own. Hitler and

Goebbels were declared to have been deposed. The *Gauleiters* of North Germany decided to support Stennes in the total revolution, and Goebbels' second betrayal was reported in large type in all their papers. Once more Ley's Cologne was the only *Gau* to remain faithful to the Führer.

Meanwhile counter-plots were being secretly hatched in Munich. This was no political cabal, but a revolt of armed men led by a man on whom Hitler had believed he could implicitly rely. All the high officials of the National-Socialist Party of the North were summarily dismissed. But to deliver the counter-stroke and crush Stennes' men a leader with an iron hand was required, and Pfeffer von Salomon proved inadequate. One man, and one only, could save Hitler, and this was his old friend Roehm, who had recently returned from Bolivia. Adolf did not hesitate to appeal to him, and Roehm, who remained attached to him in spite of many disappointments, consented.

Violence is always answered with violence. To crush the insurrection Roehm chose Lieutenant Schultz, an individual with a murky past, one of the *Fehme* murderers at whose name all Germany shuddered. Schultz was undoubtedly the man for the job. The S.A. revolt, having failed to develop into a revolution, was crushed on Easter Monday, thanks to him and to the co-operation of the S.S. and the police.

'There must be no martyrs or malcontents in our ranks,' Roehm ordered. 'Do not indulge in reprisals and promise an increase in pay to those who give in.'

Meanwhile Hitler too had come to Berlin. Would he, as in the previous September, go from café to café appealing to the S.A. not to compromise his position?

No. Times had changed. At the time of the last elections the threatening attitude of the S.A. might have influenced the result at the poll. Now, with the Party holding one hundred and seven seats and the revolt stifled, Hitler could content himself with a grandiloquent manifesto.

Nothing came of Stennes' great *putsch*. The defeated captain and thousands of resolute men passed that day into the ranks of the Black Front.

The zealous Roehm did not rest content with saving Hitler. As S.A. Chief of Staff he decreed that in future Adolf was always to be referred to as '*Mein Führer*', and that he was to be addressed in the third person.

Thus died the 'drummer of the revolution' and thus the 'Führer' of the German people was officially born.

Adolf should have been touched by such devotion, but recent experiences had made him suspicious. If Pfeffer had proved inadequate, if Stennes had betrayed him, Roehm, with whom he had already had such violent clashes, might one day turn against him too. To guard against this danger he needed a body of shock troops devoted to him to the death. The rapid increase in numbers and importance of the small paramilitary organization of the S.S. dates from this time, and Himmler soared to giddy heights. Roehm, chief of the S.A., and Himmler, chief of the S.S., were at daggers drawn. Hitler viewed their antagonism with

favour. Machiavelli would have approved of his pupil. The precept 'divide and rule' was never better applied.

Naturally the activities of the Black Front were incessantly disturbed by the aggression of Hitler's hirelings. Our secret meetings were often ferreted out, and the police declared themselves powerless to protect our men from Nazi violence. When we were few in number Himmler's thugs would insinuate themselves into our midst, storm the platform and put the speaker out of action before you could say Jack Robinson. At Bremen, Helken came off with a broken arm and knife wounds in the chest and stomach. On one occasion I was bludgeoned, wounded in the eye and only saved by the intervention of some courageous Stahlhelm men. When I was confronted with my assailants in court, one of them confessed that he had had orders to kill me while I was speaking, but, not having succeeded in cutting off the electricity and plunging the hall into darkness, he had had to abandon the idea.

There was an even bloodier affray at Itzehoe. My friend Buchrucker, who had co-operated with me in the foundation of the Black Front, had a meeting with Dr. Grantz, a young veterinary surgeon whom Hitler's party had christened 'the hero of Wöhrden'. He was a fine type, intelligent, courageous and honest, and had led the Hitlerites to victory against the Communists

in 1929 in an affray which cost several of his men their lives. Adolf had attended the victims' funeral. He had embraced the hero of Wöhrden before his comrades' open grave and declared between his sobs:

'Dr. Grantz, I shall never forget this moment!'

Less than two years later he learned of Buchrucker's meeting with Grantz. 'Get rid of them!' he roared. Himmler knew what was expected of him.

The *coup* which was intended to cost Buchrucker and the hero of Wöhrden their lives was only a partial success. Warned by past experience, our men were always armed and on the alert. Grantz was wounded and Buchrucker's nose was broken, but the assailants were put to flight. Poor Grantz! It might have been better had he succumbed to his wounds. Since 1933 he has been in a concentration camp. In six years no charge has been made against him, and he has not even been interrogated.

There were similar incidents at Hamburg, Frankfurt, and Stuttgart. But, though the pack of killers were at liberty to murder my friends, they had orders to take me alive and to avoid even wounding me.

This was not so easy.

I remember an exciting chase through the little town of Rostock. I was just coming out of a meeting when I found myself surrounded. A taxi was passing. I drew my revolver and managed to bundle myself into the taxi. The others also took taxis and the chase began.

They were twelve to one, and every time I told the

driver to slow down, thinking of asking him to put me down outside a café, restaurant or wine shop, I could see two or three other taxis on my tail. 'Go on!' I shouted to the driver, and off we went again.

Suddenly two revolver shots shattered the taxi window. The driver jammed on his brakes, abandoned the wheel and ran for his life. I had two minutes' start of my pursuers, and it was necessary to put them to good use. I was outside the entrance of a block of flats. I rang the bell. Luck was with me, for the porter, who had just locked up, promptly opened the door.

'What do you want?' he asked, but I pushed past him, slammed the door behind me and dashed upstairs four steps at a time.

On the second floor I stopped and rang a bell at random. A woman opened the door — the age of miracles is not past! She let me in, I explained the situation and she telephoned for the police.

After we had been waiting for ten minutes the door of the next room opened and a girl of about seventeen came in.

'*Heil Hitler!*' were her words of greeting.

'The young lady is an admirer of Hitler?' I asked her mother.

The answer was yes.

In spite of my situation I found this piquant. I stood to attention and introduced myself in German officer fashion:

'Otto Strasser, leader of the Black Front.'

She gave a cry and turned very pale.

'Hitler's men are waiting for me outside your house,' I added. 'The police haven't arrived yet.'

Without answering, the girl went to the window and opened it. She leaned out, scanned the street, came back and said gravely:

'Yes, they are there.'

Poor little girl! What horrible stories she must have heard about me and my collaborators. She was trembling. I told her how I had been chased through the town. She listened, and her face hardened.

We heard the noise of a car stopping outside and of men running away. Voices cried 'This way! Stop them!'

'It's the police,' the girl said. 'You're all right now. I hope they arrest the lot.'

I continued for a long time to receive letters from this young ex-admirer of Hitler's.

Our meetings were constantly raided, but the assailants were always repulsed. This persecution, so far from damaging us, actually increased our popularity. By the end of 1932 the Black Front was becoming quite a power in the land.

I introduced an innovation at public meetings, in the form of debates between political opponents. Each speaker was allowed ten minutes to put his case, after which he yielded the floor to his opponent, to

resume at the end of another ten minutes. This seemed to me an eminently fair arrangement, giving each side an immediate opportunity to reply. Attacks on absent opponents were forbidden and personal slanders involved instant expulsion from the meeting. I found that this method did a great deal to discount the advantages of eloquence. I plastered the walls of Berlin with huge placards challenging Hitler and Goebbels to take part in one of these debates and attempt to vindicate themselves before us, but the challenge was never accepted.

Hitler had bigger fish to fry. A series of adroit or violent manœuvres had brought the Chancellorship within his reach.

Towards the end of 1931, a common front of Nazis, Pan-Germans, Stahlhelm (of which the Youth section only had been secretly won over to the Black Front), S.A. and Landsbund had been formed at Harzburg under the joint leadership of Hugenberg, Hitler and Schacht. The members of this front were at loggerheads among themselves, and the only point on which they agreed was the desirability of overthrowing Chancellor Brüning and forcing the President, Field-Marshal von Hindenburg, to set up a national government of the Right. Their hopes were disappointed. The Reichstag elections of 1932 resulted in a small majority for Brüning.

The Social-Democrats had no affection for Brüning, who favoured retrenchment, wage-cutting and a reduction in the standard of living. But they lacked a

candidate to set up against 'the frenzied orator of Braunau'.

A dangerous obstacle remained to be surmounted; the election of a new President of the Republic. The Harzburg Front became so powerful that the re-election of Hindenburg, for which Brüning worked, seemed impossible without its co-operation. Hitler informed Brüning that he would support the old President on condition that the latter set up a Right Wing Cabinet and made him Chancellor. Hindenburg refused. A paradoxical situation then arose, a situation unique in history. The Prussian militarist Field-Marshal von Hindenburg became the candidate of German democracy, while the revolutionary Adolf Hitler, sponsored by the Harzburg Front, was supported by the reactionary elements of old Prussia.

But Hugenberg was a prudent man, and he thought it rash to support Hitler unconditionally. Hindenburg's majority was evident at the first poll, but as the Communists suddenly entered the lists in support of the celebrated Thaelmann, a second poll took place. Hitler then came forward, this time with all the votes of the Harzburg Front behind him, but it was of no avail. Hindenburg was re-elected. For the second time Brüning had the better of Adolf Hitler. Without the indefatigable campaigning of his Chancellor, Hindenburg would not have been returned.

Hitler, surrounded by all his faithful, learned of his defeat at Coburg, in Bavaria. He promptly burst into tears. He breaks down whenever he suffers a reverse.

Events, however, were moving swiftly in Germany, where party alliances were made one day and dissolved the next. At the municipal elections Hitler's party gained victory after victory, and Brüning, the victor of yesterday, saw the ground slipping away from beneath his feet. The ever-powerful Prussian Junkers warned Hindenburg that the Chancellor, by his new measures, was heading the country for Bolshevism. On the other hand Hugenberg's and Schacht's enthusiasm for Hitler had noticeably waned. Since his recent successes he had perceptibly drawn away from them and relapsed into his old revolutionary ideas. The game of biters bit began once more.

Chancellor Brüning was disowned by the President and resigned, and von Papen, Hugenberg's new candidate, succeeded him. Hitler promised von Papen his support.

On the strength of this promise the exquisite Franz von Papen, reserve captain of Hussars, former Embassy attaché, proprietor of the Catholic journal *Germania*, man of the subtlest strokes and most cunning and ingenious devices, envoy extraordinary on the most hopeless missions, incorrigible dilettante doomed to perpetual mortifications, felt himself in a position to establish a kind of dictatorship. 'Once more Hitler is checkmated,' Hugenberg stated on the night of July 20, 1932.

But the Reichstag elections on July 31 gave the Nazis two hundred and thirty seats.

On the same night the S.A., believing the time for

action had come, committed a series of atrocities at Königsberg. A few days later a number of political murders were reported from Silesia. At Potemba the worker Pietrzuch was trampled to death by S.A. men in the presence of his mother. The murderers were arrested and condemned to death, but Hitler proclaimed his solidarity with them and telegraphed his sympathies to them in prison.

General von Schleicher, Minister of War in the von Papen Cabinet, now decided that it was time to make a firm stand. Schleicher was an ambitious man. Not long ago he had received Roehm and, with the latter's consent, had agreed to overthrow Brüning, on condition that Hitler did not intrigue for the office of Chancellor; and he had put von Papen in power with Hitler's approval. General von Schleicher informed the Nazis that if they misbehaved themselves again the Reichswehr would fire on them, and von Papen proclaimed martial law.

Was there to be another *putsch*? Would the Reichswehr dare to fire on the S.A. and the thirteen million Germans behind Hitler?

No. Hitler decided otherwise. As a reward for continuing his support of the von Papen Cabinet he imperiously demanded 'three nights of liberty for the S.A.', in other words three nights on which murder and violence could flourish unrestrained. Von Papen declined to assume responsibility for this, and next day Hitler, Roehm and Frick went to see President Hindenburg.

The old man received them leaning on his stick. From under his lowered brows he contemplated the three men who stood before him. He detested Roehm for his unnatural vice, and in his eyes Hitler was still 'the Bohemian corporal' (Hindenburg would never admit that Hitler was an Austrian). Frick meant nothing to him whatever.

'You demand power,' the field-marshal growled. 'I can only offer you the Post Office.'

Hitler was about to launch forth upon an explanation, but the field-marshal cut him short.

'You are breaking your word. You promised to support von Papen.'

The audience lasted less than ten minutes. Crestfallen, the three Nazis withdrew. Hindenburg followed them to the door, brandishing his stick.

'No more of these acts of violence!' he shouted after them.

He might have been Frederick William, the serjeant-king, who used personally to administer drubbings to his rebellious subjects.

Once more there was a rapid change of scene. Hitler had sustained an unimportant defeat. His popularity was growing, and he decided to fight von Papen by the old parliamentary methods. As a result we were treated to the remarkable spectacle of Nazis defending the institutions of the Weimar Republic in the Reichstag in Berlin. Goering acted as the spokesman of democracy while the Communists allied themselves with the Nazis. It was all past compre-

hension. But von Papen had to resign and was replaced by General von Schleicher.

Schleicher's plans were very simple. He wanted to get rid of Hitler while preserving the good and useful elements in National-Socialism. He wanted a government resting on a broad basis, on the Reichswehr, the trade unions and the intellectuals. Whom could he choose to second him better than Gregor Strasser, excellent organizer and true socialist?

Gregor Strasser hesitated. If he agreed to become Vice-Chancellor, perhaps one day even Chancellor, would he not be betraying Hitler?

He wanted his conscience to be clear. He put the question to President Hindenburg.

'I give you my word of honour,' the latter declared, 'that the Bohemian corporal will never be Chancellor.'

Gregor thereupon departed for Munich to consult Adolf and tell him what Hindenburg had said.

Hitler, after some hesitation, agreed in principle to Gregor's becoming Vice-Chancellor and promised to come to Berlin in December to settle the details of the new Cabinet.

I have already mentioned that events moved quickly in 1932. Gregor, assured of Adolf's consent, proposed to Schleicher a new ally, Herr Leipart, leader of the German free trade unions.

Once more the Junkers took fright. Why had they overthrown Brüning if the Government were again moving to the Left?

Hugenberg and Schacht, aware of their mistake,

Gregor turned on his heel and left the room without a word.

On the same evening he resigned all his offices and his seat in the Reichstag and left with his family for the South. He spoke to no one, and took no one into his confidence, but remained in the Party, resolved, as a simple soldier in the ranks, to continue his fight for the ideas which were dear to him and for the man who had just misjudged and betrayed him.

Meanwhile a no less dramatic scene took place at the Palace of the Chancellery.

'Is it true,' Chancellor von Schleicher asked his old friend von Papen, 'is it true that you are plotting against me with Hitler?'

'It is false,' von Papen replied.

'Think, Franz. Can you give me your word of honour!'

'I give you my word of honour,' Captain von Papen of the Hussars solemnly replied.

Schleicher, speechless with indignation, took from his wallet a photograph showing Hitler, von Papen and Schroeder in conversation outside the financier's house. Von Papen attempted an explanation, but Schleicher cut him short.

'That's enough, I know what to believe,' he said.

That evening Schleicher received Gregor before the latter's departure. He was less hurt by von Papen's actions than by his mendacity.

'An officer, remember, a German officer,' he repeated. 'I blush for our army.'

'What are you going to do?'

'Nothing. Anything I did would look like personal revenge. I'm not afraid of their intrigues.'

Schleicher, however, was too sure of himself. The plot that led to his undoing was of the deadliest kind. Oscar von Hindenburg, one of the worst intriguers of them all, drew his father's attention to the laxity of the Chancellor's morals and his scandalous amours. The speech the latter had made on December 15, his profession of faith as a 'social general', had frightened old Hindenburg as well as the capitalists. Schleicher's days of power were numbered, but he only realized it on January 28, when it was too late.

On the 26th I dined with Madame Tabouis, the French journalist, at a restaurant in the Unter den Linden.

'There is nothing to be afraid of,' that charming woman assured me. 'I have just come from Schleicher's, and he tells me he has Hitler in the hollow of his hand.'

'Well,' I replied, laughing, 'if he has him there, he had better hold him tight; otherwise it will be too late.'

I wonder if Madame Tabouis ever thinks of that conversation?

Once more Hindenburg declared that things could not go on in this fashion. The Red General Schleicher

must resign and von Papen be recalled. Hitler, if necessary, could be Vice-Chancellor.

That night there was a meeting of von Papen, Hitler, Hugenberg, Seldte, leader of the Stahlhelm, and Dusterberg. 'I must be Chancellor,' Hitler insisted, 'or I refuse to support the new Cabinet.'

But Hugenberg appeared inflexible.

'Von Papen has Hindenburg's confidence. Von Papen has our confidence. Von Papen it shall be.'

Hugenberg and Seldte, supported by Meissner and Oscar von Hindenburg, refused to yield. Hitler was exasperated. His voice was tremulous and his eyes watery. Nobody noticed that Herr von Papen had crept out of the room.

'I shan't allow myself to be pushed aside,' Hitler shouted.

Von Papen came back, very calmly, and whispered something in his ear.

At dawn Herr von Alversleben burst into the room.

'We must act quickly! Schleicher refuses to leave the Chancellery. He has mobilized the Potsdam garrison for an emergency.'

There was a general panic. Hugenberg and Seldte feared nothing so much as a Red military dictatorship.

The news put the old President in a panic too. His entourage became excited, and his Ministers trembled. Von Papen alone smiled secretly, while Hitler made a bold display of resolution. Was he not the strongest man in Germany? Had he not the S.A. to pit against

the Potsdam garrison? In point of fact there was no question of mobilizing the Potsdam garrison. Von Papen was too compromised with Schleicher to desire immediate power, but his ruse had succeeded.

As the clocks struck twelve the Bohemian corporal presented himself to Field-Marshal von Hindenburg as Chancellor of the Reich.

Adolf was in power. He had stopped at nothing to get it. Only one thing was still lacking, and that was absolute authority.

But what were Goering and Goebbels for if a trifle like that was to present any difficulties?

On the night of February 27 the streets of Berlin resounded with the clamour of fire engines, tearing through the Chancellery district in the direction of the Zoo. It was a few minutes past nine. At half past nine all Berlin knew what had happened. The Reichstag was on fire.

Thousands of onlookers gathered to watch the blaze. The building was surrounded by a cordon of police. Flames roared through a yawning hole in the shattered glass dome. Goering and Goebbels appeared on the scene. They spoke historic words. They already knew all about the catastrophe; the full extent of Communist guilt was already an open book to them.

I was at the Anhalt station and saw the glow in the sky. I asked my taxi-driver what it was.

'The Nazis have set fire to the Reichstag,' he replied indifferently.

Probably two-thirds of the German people suspected

the real origin of the outrage. But what difference did that make?

Next day, February 28, the senile President Hindenburg, no longer capable of independent judgment, signed a decree 'for the protection of the people and of the State'.

'Hitler has saved Germany from Bolshevism,' was the official watchword.

In reality Hindenburg had laid the legal foundations of the Hitler dictatorship and terror.

CHAPTER IX

THE GESTAPO ON MY HEELS[1]

THE signal for the outburst of terrorism had been given. I knew what this would mean for us. Persecution was about to assume a legal form, backed with all the authority of the state. Death, imprisonment or torture awaited all those on whom the Gestapo could lay its hands. We had foreseen this moment, and there were no defections from our ranks. We were determined to continue our struggle, come what may.

As early as February 4 the activities of the Black Front were prohibited by decree throughout the Reich, and all our newspapers were suppressed. Thus we were forced underground, and our 'illegal' work began. We became public outlaws and enemies of the state.

We had taken the precaution of removing our arms and our documents from the capital, and we had spent several weeks reorganizing in the provinces.

Nothing unusual occurred until February 27.

But after the Reichstag Fire, anyone who knew Hitler as I knew him could have no possible doubt about the pitiless persecution that would follow. I packed the same night, and at dawn set off in the direction of my new headquarters in a little watering place in Thuringia.

[1] The material on which this chapter is based was put at the disposal of Douglas Reed by Otto Strasser, and was used by the former in his book, *Nemesis?*

My forecast was perfectly correct. That very day the Gestapo, reinforced by Goering's auxiliary police, seized the premises we had abandoned. Himmler's and Goering's men searched high and low, but finding nothing, smashed up the whole place. The two unfortunates whom we left behind, one as caretaker and the other to cover our retreat, were taken to the concentration camp at Oranienburg.

During the following weeks hundreds of arrests took place among members of the Black Front in the Berlin area. Similar arrests took place in the provinces, Bavaria and South Germany alone excepted, for in the birthplace of National-Socialism Hitler only came into power six weeks after his conquest of Prussia.

For two months I worked secretly in Thuringia, directing the activities of my followers. Then one morning the telephone rang. A member of the Black Front who had succeeded in worming his way into the Gestapo wanted to talk to me urgently.

'Danger?' I asked him.

'Yes. X. was tortured at Oranienburg until he told them your hiding-place.'

I promptly took my departure and walked to an inn a few miles away, where I had friends, with whom I spent the night.

A car was waiting for me in the neighbouring forest at five o'clock next morning. The driver was one of my men, disguised as a stormtrooper.

'To Munich as fast as you can!' I told him.

Before we had covered thirty miles we heard the

unmistakable sound of a Berlin police motor horn, and a police car rapidly overtook us. I had time to see several Black Guards in uniform inside.

'Are they after us?' asked my driver.

'I don't know, drive on.'

There was only one road into Bavaria, and some seventeen or eighteen miles farther on we caught up with the S.S. car in our turn. This time it had stopped by the roadside.

'There's no doubt about it, then,' I murmured.

'Shall I run them down?'

'No, they outnumber us, we had better not attack them.'

To my extreme surprise the S.S. men made no attempt to stop us. For several hours we went on in the same way. Time after time the police car overtook us and then allowed us to overtake it, but we could discover no clue as to what its occupants were after.

We reached the little Bavarian town of Eichstaedt in very good time. I breathed a sigh of relief.

'Thank heavens, we're in Bavaria,' I said. 'Stop, they can't touch us here. I'll go and warn my wife of my arrival.'

Great was my surprise on emerging from the post office to see an excited assembly of Bavarians, armed with picks and cudgels, threatening eight Black Guards who were surrounding the building.

'Dirty Prussians!' they shouted. 'Stay in Berlin, or we'll send you packing back there!'

I did not yet know that that morning Himmler and Roehm had overthrown Dr. Held's Bavarian Government in favour of Adolf Hitler. The Bavarians, jealous of their independence, looked upon this handful of Black Guards as the forerunners of the Prussianization of their country.

This surprising little incident enabled me to regain my car and finally elude my pursuers. I could not imagine, however, why these armed men, who heavily outnumbered us, had not arrested us on the road.

Not long afterwards my Black Front agent in the Gestapo gained access to the special report which the Black Guards made to Heinrich Himmler, and he was thus able to provide me with the explanation.

'Knowing Otto Strasser,' the report stated, 'and being aware that he is inseparable from his automatic, and that by reason of his character he would have been capable of using it against us, we decided to wait for nightfall before attacking him, when we proposed dazzling him with our headlights and thus taking him alive.'

That is what I call personal bravery.

The situation was none the less critical for that. I ordered all my followers whose membership of the Black Front was not known to the police to join the army, the police, the S.S. or the S.A., and to continue their activities within those organizations. Hitler feared nothing more than this infiltration into his ranks of fundamentally German and decent men, who threatened in the long run to cause the disintegration

of his best troops. He ordered the most vigorous action to be taken against me, and my whereabouts to be discovered at all costs. Poor devils who had served me faithfully were continually arrested and tortured by the Gestapo. Most of them maintained an indomitable silence, but occasionally some poor wretch would break down and tell what he knew. In order to minimize the risks and difficulties I left Bavaria and established myself in the forest of Teutoburg. I was always driven by a man in S.A. uniform. I called a meeting of Black Front leaders of the North of Germany for Easter Day, and it took place a few miles from the place where thirty thousand local storm-troopers celebrated the holiday. That implied that there were no traitors in our ranks, and that our organization was functioning perfectly.

Towards mid-April I left for Chiemsee in Bavaria, and called a meeting of the Southern German leaders for May 5. I was particularly anxious to meet our Austrian representative, as I wanted to make arrangements to provide for the possibility of Germany becoming too hot to hold us. A Munich woman student, whose husband kept a chicken farm, gave me hospitality in her house on the Chiemsee, and at her suggestion the meeting was arranged, not in her house by the lakeside, but in a hut she owned six thousand feet up in the mountains.

'I'll come with you,' she said, 'and I'll take my maid, and that will make the whole thing look perfectly above-board.'

We made the ascent to the hut, and there was a romantic quality about that meeting six thousand feet above sea-level.

The Black Front leaders of Bavaria and Wurtemberg, as well as our Austrian representative, all duly made their appearance.

At midday the sun was beating straight down on the hut and the little garden, where we spread our papers on a big table and started earnestly discussing our plans. Local leaders of our organization were continually being arrested. It was necessary to replace them, to complete lists, to exchange pass-words. So warm was the May sun that we wore nothing but bathing-slips, and so absorbed were we in our work that the approach of two Black Guards took us completely by surprise.

'Your identification papers, please.'

My three companions leaned over the table and concealed the documents spread on it with their naked bodies. The Black Guards had only to lift a hand and all our most precious secrets would have been revealed.

I was the only one who could speak the Bavarian dialect, and so it was I who answered.

'Where do you expect us to keep our papers? Do you take them about with you when you're in bathing costume?'

One of the Black Guards made as if to attack me, but the other restrained him.

'What are you doing here?' he asked.

I answered loudly, in order to be overheard by the two women, who were sun-bathing not far away.

'What does one do in a mountain-hut? You'd better ask the two ladies.'

They immediately came over, and with much pleasantry and adroitness applied themselves to softening the two young soldiers' hearts.

'All right,' said the aggressive one who had nearly attacked me. 'Two women and four men. It's peculiar, but we shall see.'

They went away in the direction of the Austrian frontier, which was only about two hundred yards away.

'Let us escape into Austria,' our hostess suggested. 'I don't see any other way out.'

'Black Guards will be guarding the frontier,' our Austrian representative pointed out.

From time to time we heard Hitler's men blowing their whistles. Answering whistles came from all the heights surrounding the hut.

Never have I felt such an acute sense of danger. There seemed to be no way of escape. The curtain seemed to be about to fall on the third act of a drama.

But a miracle happened. A tremendous thunderstorm broke out. The sky was completely blacked out, big hailstones covered the half-melted snow, every rock became a waterfall and every crevice a torrent. A gale of wind arose, the thunder was terrific, and the lightning came in blinding flashes.

'This is our only hope,' I whispered to the young woman. 'Let us try to get back.'

The others were experienced mountaineers, and I had difficulty in keeping pace with them.

The lightning flashes enabled us to see now a man clinging to a rock, now another lying prone on a ledge; then the blackness of night descended again, and our pursuers stumbled, fell, picked themselves up and resumed the chase.

We had a good quarter of an hour's start, and our party were more experienced in the mountains. After a six-hour struggle with the elements we reached the little house on the Chiemsee safe and sound.

It was clear that the Gestapo were hot on our trail, and we might be discovered at any moment. It was obviously necessary to flee again.

My first care was to blacken my hair and buy a false moustache and a pair of spectacles.

On May 9 I was just preparing to leave Chiemsee when a car stopped outside the door. The driver got out, opened the garden gate and handed my hostess a letter. It was addressed to me. She pretended she did not know me and brought the letter in to me, telling the driver she would ask her husband.

I immediately recognized Gregor's handwriting. I hastily tore open the envelope. I had not heard from him for two years.

'I dined last night with the Minister Frick,' he wrote. 'He told me that Goering was sending two death squads to Chiemsee to kill you. I have come to

Munich by aeroplane, and I appeal to you to fly to Austria in the car that I am sending you. Gregor.'

I hurried out to the driver.

'Can you take me to Munich to the gentleman who gave you this letter?'

'Certainly.'

An hour later I was with my brother. It was a moving meeting. I was never to see him again.

Gregor, to disguise his emotion, laughed and remarked how much I had changed.

Obviously the moustache, the hair and the glasses had changed me greatly. But Gregor, who was not in disguise, had changed much more than I.

'Gregor, you're risking your neck by helping me to escape.'

'Goering will murder me one day in any case, just as he's trying to murder you now. It doesn't make any difference what I do.'

'I implore you to escape with me.'

Gregor shook his head.

'My family,' he said. 'My business.'

'And Hitler, I suppose, still Hitler.'

'No,' he said in a tired voice. 'Germany. Anywhere else life would be useless.'

We talked for several hours, and I again appealed to him to come with me, but in vain. Time pressed and I had to go. A last handshake and Gregor wished me good luck. He stayed and I went into exile.

* * * *

The car took me to an Alpine pass which, Gregor said, was very poorly guarded by the frontier police. I had a letter addressed to one of the guides there, and I had no difficulty in finding him. Towards midnight I set off with him across the mountains.

At dawn I reached the Austrian frontier, and that evening, after a tramp of eighteen hours, I reached the charming Tyrolese town of Kufstein.

No more Gestapo, I said to myself. Austria is free, and Hitler is powerless in this little German-speaking republic.

For a long time we had had a printing-works in Vienna, and a clandestine organization for sending pamphlets over the frontier. I felt I would be able to do something in this country. I hoped to gain the confidence of Chancellor Dollfuss, participate in his struggle, help him with my long experience.

As though with a premonition of the future, I called my new paper *The Black Transmitter*. I wrote three pamphlets, of which thousands of copies were sent to Berlin, *How Long Will Hitler Last?*, *The Second Revolution is in Progress*, and *Marxism is Dead, Socialism Still Lives.*

But I had counted without Steinhäusl, the Vienna chief of police, who was an agent of the Gestapo's and in Hitler's pay.

The Austrian Nazis, in the pay of Berlin, had already started a campaign of terrorism. Bombs exploded, tear gas was let loose in theatres and cinemas, Jewish shops were pillaged and trains were wrecked.

The chief of police worked his men to death, but all

to no purpose. The press was baffled. The criminals always disappeared and left no trace behind. It was all very puzzling.

What made this state of affairs all the more suspicious was that the Austrians themselves openly accused the Nazis.

In any case I soon discovered that effective work was impossible in Vienna. One day I went to Prague, to explore the ground there.

I returned forty-eight hours later. It was late, and I went straight home, but my latch-key no longer fitted the lock.

'The police came and arrested people here to-day,' the porter came and confided in me. 'They took your cousin, and I think they're after you.'

'If my cousin comes back' I said, 'tell her I shall be waiting for her at the usual café.'

I went to the café and sat down at my usual marble-topped table. I ordered a coffee with whipped cream and asked for an evening paper. After paying the bill, I had only fifty groschen left, which was worth about fourpence.

The waiter brought me some papers. I read the following startling information, printed in large type:

'Yesterday, July 4, the police at last discovered the perpetrators of the bombing outrages. They are members of the Black Front, Otto Strasser's General Staff. Seventeen men and two women have been arrested. Otto Strasser, the leader, has unfortunately escaped.'

Nothing in all this was true. My friends were innocent, and there was I, caught in Vienna like a rat in a trap.

In a flash the true situation of Austria and myself dawned on me.

A year later, when Steinhäusl was thrown into prison for his part in the murder of Dollfuss, and subsequently when he was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment, I thought of the evening of July 5, 1933, when I sat in that Vienna café and had a premonition of the future.

Steinhäusl was, of course, released by the Nazis after the *Anschluss* and reinstated as chief of police. But, hated as he was by the Austrians, he was killed in November, 1939, in a brawl between some Vienna stormtroopers and the police.

Meanwhile I was in a tight spot. I could not go home, nor could I go to an hotel with fifty groschen in my pocket. The only thing to do was to return to Prague as quickly as possible.

After a night spent in the pouring rain, I managed to secure some money and made my way to the station. To enter Austria I had used a false passport, made out in a name which had started getting too well-known to be comfortable in Germany. A fortnight later my friends in the Black Front had procured me another. With its aid I had no difficulty in crossing the Czech frontier, but in Vienna I left nineteen friends, who were only released a year later, when the proofs of Steinhäusl's guilt confirmed their innocence.

Once more I had to make a fresh start, with a new name, in a new city, and in a new country.

I was no longer Otto Strasser, which had been my name in Berlin, or Engineer X, as I had been known in Vienna. I was a being without a past, and when I established myself in Prague I had difficulty in recognizing myself. But the Gestapo were still on my trail.

Three months of relative peace gave me a sense of growing security. Then one morning I was suddenly awakened by my landlady.

'It's the police! It's the police. They are looking for you!'

There is something so funny about German spoken with a Czech accent that I could not help laughing. The woman woke me so suddenly that it took me several moments to pull myself together.

Two policemen entered my room, and a flood of unintelligible Czech was let loose upon me.

'Excuse me, gentlemen, but in the first place who are you, and in the second place would you mind speaking German?'

They showed me their police badges, which were perfectly correct, and asked me if I were Engineer X.

This was, of course, the name I had used in Austria. I smiled.

'No, I am afraid I don't know the gentleman. I believe he died some time ago.'

'Your identification papers, please.'

I produced my passport, which was perfectly in

order. It was even stamped with the special visa without which Germans were no longer allowed to go abroad.

The two policemen kept me covered with their revolvers. They examined my passport carefully and seemed discountenanced.

One of them started searching my drawers while the other went through my entire wardrobe. He confiscated my revolver, shouting in German that such weapons were forbidden.

Swearing and cursing, they handed me back my passport and left, slamming the door behind them.

My landlady immediately entered the room.

'There were two other policemen outside,' she said in her precarious German. 'They were all very angry, but they have gone away.'

About midday I called on M. Benda, chief of the police political department, to complain about my discourteous treatment.

'Why send four armed policemen in a car?' I asked him. 'You know me.'

M. Benda looked at me in astonishment.

'You must have made a mistake,' he said. 'We have no car.'

During the afternoon he telephoned me.

'Please come immediately,' he said, 'and bring your landlady with you. We want a statement from her. No police order about you was issued from here.'

My landlady was exceedingly eloquent. Once

launched out in her own language there was no stopping her.

We learned that the number of the car which had stopped outside the house was IIA, in white letters on a black background. Czech number plates were always in black on a white background. This indicated that the car came from Germany, and more specifically from Munich.

'Of course!' exclaimed the good woman, to whom this revelation opened new horizons. 'The men waiting outside spoke German, and when the other two came back they threw down a big piece of cotton-wool and trampled angrily on it. It smelled of . . . something strange, I don't quite know what.'

An examination of the spot revealed the cotton-wool. The smell, however, had evaporated.

The Gestapo had obviously been trying to kidnap me. The order still seemed to be 'bring him back alive'.

Moreover the Gestapo would have succeeded in kidnapping me on this occasion if they had employed Black Guards from Munich, who would certainly have recognized me. But, for a change, Herr Himmler had detailed four Sudeten Germans for the job. The latter could, of course, speak Czech. I owed my escape to my false passport and the credulity of these bogus policemen.

The Prague authorities were exceedingly indignant at this German *coup* brazenly attempted in their capital city. Henceforward I was given special police protection, and the investigation department, in which the

carefree spirit of a happy country had hitherto prevailed, was reorganized. These measures were not, unfortunately, extended to the provinces; otherwise the shocking murder of my friend Formis would not have taken place.

For the time being I was left in peace, and my dear friend Heinrich Himmler realized he could not touch me. But the Gestapo net is spread wide, and more was in store for me.

At the beginning of March, 1934, I was invited by the Prague Law Society to deliver a lecture on National-Socialism which had considerable political repercussions. Next day a smartly dressed, tall, fair Englishman came to see me. He was called Mr. Frank, and he was accompanied by a gentleman named Pollak, a Jewish business man of Prague, whom he introduced as his future brother-in-law.

Frank, who spoke German with a perfect English accent, informed me that he was acting as representative of an American anti-Nazi society, the name of which he was not entitled to divulge, and he said he was very interested in my work.

'My instructions,' he said, 'are to procure five thousand copies of your new weekly, and help with its distribution in Germany. I will pay you cash for so many weeks or so many months in advance, whichever you prefer.'

'That is very kind of you, Mr. Frank,' I replied, 'but my organization is already complete, and I am in no need of further assistance.'

Mr. Frank was not to be lightly put off.

'Very well,' he said, 'if you do not wish for my assistance in the distribution of the paper, I will at any rate give you the money for three months in advance.'

This offer I accepted, particularly as Mr. Frank showed me a proper British passport, and his 'Jewish brother-in-law' seemed a good guarantee.

When the three months were over, Mr. Frank came to see me again. He declared himself very satisfied with our collaboration, and gave me a pressing invitation to accompany him to Paris.

'My American patron would very much like to meet you,' he said, 'but he cannot come to Prague for the moment. He will be in Paris at the beginning of June. Won't you travel to Paris with me?'

I had made inquiries of the police, but nothing in any way suspicious was known either about Frank or about Pollak.

I made various excuses to avoid travelling in their company, but promised to keep the appointment in Paris that Mr. Frank suggested.

I was, however, compelled to postpone the journey for some days, and I reached Paris after the 15th. I informed Frank of the delay, though I refrained from telling him the exact date of my departure or the train by which I proposed travelling.

'How unfortunate!' Mr. Frank exclaimed when he came to see me in Paris. 'My patron has had to go to the Saar. He is conferring with Conrad Heiden, who

could not come here. He expects you on June 21 at Saarbrücken.'

All this was none too plausible, but after all it was not entirely impossible that the American leader of an anti-Nazi league might wish to meet such a distinguished anti-Nazi author as Conrad Heiden.

'We shall go there together on the 20th,' Frank hurriedly added.

'Thank you, I have business in the provinces, but I shall be there on the 21st.'

Frank agreed. His manner was very friendly. We arranged a meeting at such-and-such a time at Saarbrücken on June 21.

I had no desire to travel with this suspicious individual, and also I wanted to talk to Conrad Heiden before seeing him again. I had had the prudence not to tell Frank that I knew Heiden, and that I knew he was at Saarbrücken.

On June 21 I went to Saarbrücken, the capital of the Saar, which was still independent, and Conrad Heiden came to meet me at the station.

'Strasser,' he said, after we had exchanged a cordial greeting, 'your letter was all Greek to me, I couldn't make head or tail of it. I know neither Frank nor his patron. Be careful.'

'Of course, but I want to get to the bottom of this business.'

Men in civilian clothes, but with a military bearing and big German boots, were walking up and down outside the Hotel Reichsadler. I know you, my dear

Black Guards, but you won't catch me, I said to myself.

Mr. Frank arrived.

'Come up to my room, my dear fellow,' he said.

With my hand in the pocket in which I kept my revolver, I followed him into a luxurious hotel bedroom.

We started talking about Germany.

'The situation is critical,' I said. 'A second revolution is in the offing.'

'We shall have some surprises before the end of the month,' Frank remarked. 'Germany will have a blood-bath the like of which the world has never seen.'

'Really, Mr. Frank,' I said. 'Was it your patron who told you that?'

Mr. Frank looked uncomfortable.

'He hasn't come yet. In the meantime is there anything I can offer you? A bath or a glass of champagne?'

'No, thank you, Mr. Frank,' I said, laughing. 'If only I were sure you were an agent of the Gestapo, and if only I were not afraid of complications with the British Embassy, I'd shoot you dead on the spot with this revolver.'

Mr. Frank grew very pale.

'Herr Strasser,' he said, 'your sense of humour is rather difficult for an Englishman to understand.'

There was a short silence.

'Will you excuse me for a moment while I telephone?' he said.

He went away for a few minutes, and then returned. He seemed agitated.

'He hasn't come yet, but he won't be long. I'm terribly sorry that you are having to wait like this.'

By this time I was convinced. If Frank had been a genuine Englishman, not implicated in the Gestapo, he would have struck me, or at least he would have reacted indignantly to the insult I had flung at him. He was, however, only an agent, instructed 'to bring me back alive'. He was still waiting for his accomplices. The idea was for us all to have a merry party. As soon as I was full of drink they would take me for a ride in a motor car over the German frontier.

'Very well, Mr. Frank, but you must excuse me while I go and cancel another appointment. Allow me to leave my bag here. I shall be back in half an hour.'

Outside the hotel I called out in an authoritative voice to the booted men who were standing there on the watch.

'A taxi, quickly!'

A German never fails to recognize the voice of an ex-officer.

A taxi appeared in less than a minute, and I went straight to see Conrad Heiden.

'Leave by the first train,' he said. 'I'll go and see Mr. Frank and apologise for you, and I'll collect your bag. It will be very funny.'

In the train I thought of Mr. Frank's words. Germany, he said, would have a blood-bath.

He must have felt very certain of my capture. Otherwise he would never have said anything so indiscreet.

In spite, however, of the events of June 30, when his forecast came true, Mr. Frank did not hesitate to call on me again in Prague.

'My dear fellow, you let me down terribly,' he said. 'My patron will never forgive me. You owe me reparation. Come along, my private aeroplane is waiting.'

I burst out laughing.

'Frank,' I said, 'you take me for a fool.'

'Not at all,' he replied. 'If you don't trust me, take your faithful colleague Mahr as pilot.'

Mahr, whose real name was Adam, was the son of a rich Jewish merchant in Berlin. In spite of this guarantee, I made some objections in order to gain time.

As soon as Frank left me I telephoned to M. Benda, chief of the police political department.

'Listen, M. Benda,' I said. 'The person I spoke to you about is in Prague, at the Hotel Sroubek.'

Adam, alias Mahr, was by my side as I telephoned, and as soon as I said this I noticed that he left the room.

By the time the police reached the Hotel Sroubek Frank had disappeared. My faithful Adam and Mr. Frank's secretary were, however, arrested. After a few weeks they made complete confessions.

Frank was a Berlin Gestapo official, in charge of the Black Front dossier. After his failure to kidnap me at

Saarbrücken (the kidnapping had been arranged for four o'clock that afternoon), he had suborned my two colleagues, Kritsche, whose real name was Hildebrand, and Mahr (the faithful Adam). To the first he had offered plenty of money, to the second 'aryanization'.

After a few years' imprisonment the traitor Adam was released, and I have never seen him again, but I know that he and Hildebrand continued their unsavoury activities. A year ago they were in Copenhagen.

That was the end of my adventure with Mr. Frank, whose only success was to have financed the distribution of fifty thousand anti-Nazi pamphlets in Germany.

Tragedy, however, was to follow. Adam had had time to reveal the name of the man who had set up our secret broadcasting station. We had set it up for the purpose of fighting Hitler with his own weapons. Actually the wireless, that indispensable instrument of propaganda, had been scarcely exploited for propaganda purposes outside Germany and Italy. Wireless propaganda, that powerful weapon without which a modern war is almost unthinkable, was in its infancy. There is no more effective device for demoralizing the enemy and making the truth heard in his country. The Black Front was the first organization in Europe

and the world to make use of a secret wireless transmitter for political purposes, and it was my friend Formis who was responsible for the idea.

Formis was an absolutely first-class man. A brilliant officer during the war, an electro-technician and distinguished inventor in the wireless field, he had quickly obtained an important post in Germany.

He directed the Stuttgart broadcasting station with as much love for his job as hatred for Adolf Hitler. Soon after the latter's accession to power, he sabotaged his big Stuttgart speech by himself cutting the cable. The police failed to discover him, but as this kind of thing happened at Stuttgart every time Hitler spoke, he ended by becoming suspect. He managed to escape, and after innumerable adventures succeeded in joining me in Prague.

The secret transmitter that Formis made was so perfect that after his murder it was exhibited at the Prague Post Office museum.

The task we set ourselves was no easy one. It was necessary to set up the transmitter in a safe place, unknown to the Czech authorities. It was also necessary to find an announcer, and to have someone in reserve to take his place should he fall a victim to the Gestapo. We had scarcely any money. Our followers in Germany sent us remittances from time to time, but they were small and few because of exchange difficulties.

At last we found a place called Zahori, about forty miles from Prague, on the banks of the Moldau, where there was a charming week-end hotel. The proprietor

did not seem to be inquisitive, and as it was late in the season the hotel was nearly empty. Here Formis set to work, and a few weeks later his transmitter was working beautifully, broadcasting the truth about Hitler three times an hour every day.

Hitler lost sleep over it, and Himmler trembled for his life. He summoned his assistant, the sinister Heydrich, and ordered him to discover and destroy the secret announcer who was attacking the dictatorial régime at its weakest point. But four weeks, then four months passed, and the 'Black Transmitter' was still on the air.

On January 16, 1935, I went to Zahori to make a recording of my usual weekly speech.

'Nothing suspicious yet, Formis?' I added.

'No, nothing at all. A couple from Germany, young and harmless. They left again this morning.'

'Be careful!'

'I'm armed, and that young woman won't do me any harm.'

'Who are they?'

'Hans Müller, a business man from Kiel, and a woman gymnastic teacher, named Edith Kersbach. She's very pretty.'

'If they come back, warn the Aliens Department.'

Formis did not tell me that, under the pretext of making her gentleman friend jealous, the woman had had herself photographed by one of the waiters arm-in-arm with him.

On January 23 the couple reappeared, and as it

was late and the hotel was not on the telephone, Formis put off warning the police till next day.

The man, who seemed tired, retired to his room before dinner, and the young woman remained alone with Formis.

The hotel people told me later that never had they seen a young woman behave as she did. Never had they seen a respectable woman fling herself at a complete stranger like that. When they left the lounge they wondered whether she wasn't going to sit on his knee.

About ten o'clock Formis and Edith went up to the first floor. Müller had taken room No. 3 and Formis occupied No. 7.

A few minutes after ten o'clock a waiter who slept in the basement was awakened by revolver shots. He dashed to the first floor, and saw Müller dragging Formis' body towards No. 7. Edith was bent double, groaning like a wounded animal. An unknown man was standing there and threatened him with two revolvers. The whole hotel staff was roused, but this man kept them all at bay. He made them all go down to the cellar at the revolver-point, and locked them in. The proprietor and his family, who lived in the other wing, heard nothing of all this.

Suddenly the terrified hotel staff noticed huge clouds of smoke issuing from one of the windows. Stimulated by terror, some of them succeeded in slipping out by the ventilator, and went to rouse the proprietor. One of them went on foot to warn the police.

The proprietor, accompanied by a waiter, dashed to the victim's room. Formis was dead, and his body was soaked in petrol. On either side of him were two incendiary bombs, which had not exploded because of the smoke.

Meanwhile the three malefactors had disappeared in their big Mercédès.

The crime was reconstructed by the police. Müller had gone to Berlin armed with Formis' photograph, no doubt for the purpose of confirming his identity, and had returned with a second killer, whom he concealed near the hotel.

'Bring him up, whatever you do,' were the words that Müller, according to a chambermaid, had muttered to the young woman before going up to his room.

'He spoke in a whisper,' she said, 'but I was terrified by the brutality of his expression.'

While Edith was cajoling Formis, Müller had used a rope-ladder to introduce his accomplice into the hotel. At ten o'clock Edith, talking all the time, had led her new friend to the door of room No. 3. She had certainly invited him inside, she must even have tried to drag him in, because poor Formis's arm was scratched and torn by finger-nails. Formis, seeing the two men behind the door, had drawn his revolver, the woman had tried to snatch it from him and received a shot in the stomach. Thereupon Müller had fired, and Formis was shot twice in the stomach and once in the head.

He was killed outright. The two men, no doubt after searching vainly for the secret transmitter, which was in a loft, had soaked the corpse in petrol, dragged it into his room, and placed beside it two incendiary bombs which were intended to obliterate the traces of the crime and destroy the mysterious transmitter.

The rope-ladder was still suspended from the window, and drops of blood showed how the woman had been carried out. The murderers' car was stopped several times by the police, but the two men's papers were in order and the dying woman, who no doubt lay at the bottom of the car, covered with coats and rugs, was not seen. A blood-stained petticoat was found some way away on the banks of the Moldau. We subsequently learned from Germany that the woman died twenty-four hours later, on her way to hospital.

The crime was completed, and the murderers received their reward. The voice of truth that had spoken to the German people was silenced, and Hitler and Himmler could once more sleep in peace.

Diplomatic representations were made, and protests and exchanges of Notes took place between Prague and Berlin. Although the Czech police established beyond any possibility of doubt the complicity of the German authorities, Berlin obstinately repudiated all responsibility.

The German Minister in Prague even had the temerity to inquire whether Otto Strasser, guilty of operating a clandestine wireless transmitter, was to go unpunished. As a result on January 6, 1936, I was

sentenced to four months' imprisonment. But President Benes made the sentence ineffective by continually postponing my appeal.

After this appalling story I shall pass over the minor attempts that were made to get me. I can only smile when I think of my faithful Constantin's poison-bottle, of the anonymous letters that summoned me to gallant *rendezvous*, and the ill-advised attempt made by an English pseudo-journalist to persuade me to spend a sentimental week-end in the Sudetenland.

I shall only describe two incidents that have a certain political bearing.

In January, 1938, on my way back from Switzerland, I spent a few days in Vienna. I was warned by Herr Guido Zernatto, leader of the Fatherland Front and Minister without Portfolio, that Hitler's men now had orders to shoot me as soon as I set foot on Austrian soil. Herr Zernatto said the Austrian police could not guarantee my safety, and advised me to avoid Vienna.

This was two months before the *Anschluss*. That will be sufficient to indicate the terror already prevalent in Austria.

The second incident occurred in Prague seven months later. A member of the Black Front warned me of a plan to kidnap me in the car belonging to Colonel Toussaint, Military Attaché at the German Legation. The plan was said to have originated with von Bibra, Counsellor of the Legation.

Colonel Toussaint's chauffeur, who was naturally a

Black Guard, was given the task of recruiting the necessary thugs, and he found two Sudeten Germans belonging to Henlein's party who were willing to do the job. All he needed to gain my confidence was a German refugee who would seem beyond suspicion.

The refugee was found, but he hastened to inform the police.

This time it was decided to catch the criminals red-handed. The refugee claimed an advance on the fee that was promised him, and, with the connivance of the police, met the chauffeur and his accomplices at a café. The police surprised them just when the money was being passed.

The fact that German diplomats put themselves at the disposal of the Gestapo was not new. Once more Prague vigorously protested to Berlin.

The chauffeur was expelled, the Sudeten Germans were imprisoned, and Colonel Toussaint was recalled.

As for Bibra, he was transferred to Berne, where I came across him again, for I left Prague in September, 1938, when Hitler was threatening to invade Czechoslovakia. Herr von Bibra could scarcely do harm in Switzerland, where there are no traitors and fortunately no Henleins.

One thing more to complete my tale and throw additional light on German methods.

On November 23, 1939, the German wireless officially admitted that my friend Formis was killed by two Black Guards by order of the Reich authorities.

CHAPTER X

THE GERMAN BLOOD-BATH

DURING the first year of my exile events in Germany followed the course I had foreseen. The Hitler régime pursued its destructive way, sapping at the foundations of the old order, oscillating violently from reaction to revolution, unable to fix upon a stable course.

To keep himself in power Adolf Hitler used two instruments, propaganda and terrorism, the devastating effectiveness of which it would be idle to deny.

If we are to understand the tragic events of June 30, 1934, we must pause in our narrative and once again consider the forces that brought Hitler into power.

Hugenberg, the man of German heavy industry, von Papen, the reactionary and candidate of the Junkers, put Hitler's foot in the stirrup, and President Hindenburg, that incarnation of Prussianism, reluctantly made him Chancellor.

Industrialists and generals still looked upon the ex-Austrian corporal as a servant who, when properly trained, would serve their interests well. They utterly failed to recognize the dynamic quality of the National-Socialist movement and Hitler's rôle as an instrument of history. A revolution had been born of the German cauldron, and had carried Adolf Hitler to the surface, where he floated like a skilful swimmer. The fact that

he could float at all showed the depth of the revolutionary flood.

A struggle for Hitler's allegiance ensued between the forces of conservativism and the new and virulent forces that Hitler had engendered; and between the two he vacillated, a prisoner of his own indecision. This was both his strength and his weakness.

Dissatisfaction, however, existed. The 'Jacobins' accused the 'Gironde' of weakness. The S.A., who, unlike the S.S., were sworn to the Party, and owed allegiance to an ideal and not to the Führer, consisted of radicals — three million Germans exasperated by the politics of Papen, Hugenberg and Schacht.

'When will the second revolution begin?' was the question that started to circulate among them.

Gregor Strasser, an ordinary Party member, received letters by hundreds and thousands. 'Resume your activities,' his correspondents said. 'You alone can save National-Socialism. Open the Führer's eyes. The Goerings blind him . . .'

Gregor was perfectly well aware that all his letters were opened and read before they reached him. On the other hand there was Roehm, leader of the Brownshirt army, with hundreds of secondary leaders entirely devoted to him. Social questions did not worry them, but they were hostile to the generals, and resented the fashion in which the army kept aloof from the Party. Roehm was himself an officer, and knew the German military mind only too well. The army despised the Brownshirts; it merely used Hitlerism as

a mask behind which it pursued its perennial aims. Roehm had lived in Bolivia, and had learned by experience that a political party was helpless without army backing. The generals could upset any government any day they liked.

The Gregor Strasser and Roehm front was formed in opposition to the Hindenburg, Hugenberg, Papen and Goering front, which was in alliance with the industrialists. Hitler still hesitated, while dissatisfaction grew. He knew that he must act, but did not yet know how. Behind him was Goebbels, ready for every compromise, anxious above all to be on the winning side. Adolf regretted Gregor. At a meeting in Berlin he met the head of my brother's firm and said at the top of his voice that 'he simply must recall that excellent fellow Gregor.' These words were repeated to Goering, who sharpened his arms.

Roehm was working from Munich. No contact existed between him and Gregor, though the two shared the same ideals and the same ultimate aims. Roehm's first success was to obtain the dissolution of the Stahlhelm, the paramilitary formation of the Reichswehr. He next set about attacking the Reichswehr itself, without taking into account that during Hindenburg's lifetime the conquest of the army was impossible. Instead of striking at Schacht and Thyssen, the Nazi régime's first enemies, he made Fritsch and Blomberg his immediate targets. At a meeting of the Cabinet, to which he belonged, he demanded the incorporation of the Brownshirts into the

regular army, the Brownshirt officers to retain their ranks.

In other words he demanded supreme command of the Reichswehr, the S.S. and the S.A.

He confidently believed that he had Adolf's support; he also believed that he had the enthusiastic backing of Goebbels and Darré; Frick, hesitant at first, rallied to his side, but Hitler remained silent.

The Cabinet meeting took a dramatic turn. Hitler persisted in his silence, but Blomberg, the Minister of National Defence, suddenly declared that the only course open to President Hindenburg would be to refuse outright.

'The discussion is closed,' Hitler then said, without daring to look his old friend in the face. Roehm, speechless with fury, walked quickly from the room.

After June 30 General von Reichenau declared in an interview with the *Petit Journal* that Roehm's death sentence was virtually signed that day.

Hindenburg sent for Hitler on May 28, and on June 7 it was officially announced that Roehm, acting on medical advice, was about to take a holiday of some weeks.

Hindenburg proved that his sympathies remained unchanged; he pronounced himself in favour of the two groups of reactionaries; Papen, Neurath, Meissner, i.e., the landowners, who dreaded nothing more than the socialization of the army, and Thyssen, Krupp and Schacht, i.e., the industrialists, who dreaded the socialization of industry.

Hitler felt uneasy; he knew the revolutionary spirit of the S.A. too well to feel anything else. He was only too well aware that abandoning his comrades would mean seriously impairing his prestige.

He was at the cross-roads. One way led towards a peaceful German revolution and the regeneration of the country; this was the way of Roehm, Gregor Strasser and General von Schleicher. The other was the Imperialist way of old Germany, which led inevitably to war. At this time I wrote a pamphlet, *Social Revolution or Fascist War?* of which thousands of copies were sold throughout the country.

On June 13, before leaving for Venice to meet the Duce, Adolf sent for Gregor; the two had not met since the stormy interview provoked by the intrigues of Papen, Goering and Goebbels.

'I offer you the Ministry of National Economy, Strasser. Accept, and between us we can still save the situation.'

'I accept, Herr Hitler,' said Gregor, 'on condition that Goering and Goebbels are removed; an honest man cannot work with these individuals.'

Gregor's reply, the authenticity of which has been confirmed by my brother Paul, was that of a gentleman but not of a politician. Trying to get rid of Goebbels and Goering simultaneously was beating one's head against a brick wall. Goering might have been sacrificed to Gregor. He was at odds with Himmler, to whom he was unwilling to yield control of the Berlin Gestapo. Himmler was chief of police of

Southern Germany, and insisted on bringing all the police organizations of the Reich under his personal control. Adolf favoured Himmler in this dispute, for he disliked the fashion in which Goering had gone over to the reactionaries. Also he wanted Gregor back.

Goebbels, however, was indispensable to the Führer; for, in spite of Adolf's summary treatment of Roehm at the last Cabinet meeting, Goebbels was secretly negotiating with the latter on his master's behalf.

Roehm was by no means idle, in spite of his enforced rest. He had no intention of giving in or laying down his arms. Let us raise a corner of the veil that still obscures one of the bloody episodes of June 30. Why were the landlord, the wine-waiter and the steward of the Bratwurst-Glöckle hostelry at Munich murdered on the night of the German St. Bartholomew? Were these men revolutionaries, dangerous agents, traitors or S.A. men? No, the reason for their murder was much simpler than that.

The Bratwurst-Glöckle has private rooms where two men may talk politics without being seen or recognized. The only persons aware of their presence were the landlord and the two trusted waiters who attended to them. Roehm, disgraced at Hindenburg's bidding, and Goebbels, Hitler's emissary, met there several times in the course of that famous month of June. What did they talk about? The answer is that at first their conversations were entirely non-committal; they awaited the results of Adolf's journey to Venice. Adolf had two meetings with Mussolini, on June 14

and 15. The Duce, however, failed to succumb to the German Chancellor's charms. Everything that had been happening in Germany during the last few weeks he found displeasing and alarming, and he said that Nazi terrorism in Vienna, and the constant threat to Austria and her independence, must cease. Hitler, at the Italian dictator's bidding, solemnly promised to put an end to the terror and to respect Austrian sovereignty. Mussolini, however, went still further. Would it not be prudent, he suggested, purely of course as a friend, to restrain somewhat the radical actions and speeches of the Left Wing of the National-Socialist Party? Would it not be wise to dissolve the S.A., which formed a state within the state, and was led by that notorious freebooter Roehm, in association with notorious characters such as Heines, Ernst, etc.? Would it not also, perhaps, be as well to get rid of Goering, who was accused abroad, perhaps not unjustifiably, of having been responsible for the Reichstag Fire, and of Goebbels, who dared speak of the possibility of a second revolution?

Hitler pricked up his ears. Was not this the language of von Papen, Meissner and company? Who was this Meissner after all? Before serving as Hindenburg's principal private secretary, had he not served President Ebert in the same capacity? Was he not an intriguer? It took Hitler several weeks to resolve his doubts. When he became President he retained Meissner as Hindenburg had done before him. But for the time being he was furious. He knew that Herr

von Hessel, the German Ambassador in Rome, had received instructions from President Hindenburg, from the Minister von Neurath and from his friend von Papen, and he felt certain that Mussolini was merely acting as these men's mouthpiece.

His anger concentrated on von Papen; on June 16 he met Goebbels in Munich.

The Minister of Propaganda gave him a satisfactory report on his conversations with Roehm.

'Wait a while,' said Hitler. 'There are other problems to be settled first.'

On June 17 von Papen, the Vice-Chancellor, made a speech at Marburg which left no further possibility of doubt.

Papen's rôle is very often under-estimated by superficial observers of German politics. One sees him described as a brilliant knight-errant of politics, a diplomat alternately stupid and acute, as the man who put Hitler in power, but one tends to forget his overweening ambition and his complete unscrupulousness. It is also easily forgotten that von Papen will never forgive Goering for having supplanted him as Prime Minister of Prussia, leaving him with no more than the Vice-Chancellorship. Those who appreciated these points were not at all surprised that four of von Papen's secretaries and colleagues were killed in the June 30 purge. This was Goering's way of settling a personal grudge. The diplomat had good reason to believe that he had a very narrow escape himself.

The Marburg speech, which was in effect the reactionaries' declaration of war on the revolution, contained several passages of rare interest which are worth quoting here.

'It is time to rally together, to show fraternal love and esteem for our compatriots, to disturb no longer the work of earnest men and to impose silence on doctrinaire fanatics,' von Papen said.

'The domination of a single party, in place of the system of several parties which was rightly abolished, seems to me historically a transitory stage, the only *raison d'être* for which was to assure the period of cultivation.

'For in the long run no people, if it wishes to survive before history, can permit itself eternal insurrection coming from below. The day must come when that movement has to cease, and a solid social structure must arise, sustained by equitable jurisdiction and undisputed public authority.

'Incessant dynamics lead to nothing durable.

'Germany must not resemble one of those "blue trains" which start off for adventure and then cannot stop.'

The speech did not lack adroitness. It retained its validity even after June 30. The one-party system still survived, and all the doctrinaire fanatics were not silenced.

Adolf was furious, for this was confirmation of his worst suspicions. It seemed impossible to deny that von Papen had been behind Mussolini's advice.

Adolf saw Roehm, without whom he did not seem to be able to make any decisions, and saw Goebbels and gave him instructions.

The conversations between Roehm and Goebbels at the Bratwurst-Glöckle became much more animated. When the landlord or the waiters entered their private room they only heard fragments.

'Mussolini demanded the sacrifice of the radicals . . . The reactionaries grow more and more insolent . . . The Marburg speech was a provocation . . . Adolf will put these gentlemen of the Herrenklub in their place . . . We'll make a clean sweep.'

They didn't hear much, but it was too much.

A few days later, when Hitler finally came down on the side of the reactionaries, it was important that nobody should be left alive who knew that Goebbels had just been discussing with Roehm the liquidation of the capitalist and bourgeois clique.

Hitler summoned von Papen to Berlin, but Roehm and Goebbels did not lose confidence. After the Vice-Chancellor's insult to the Chancellor, a reconciliation between them seemed impossible. The revolutionaries and the radicals appeared to have gained the day.

Franz von Papen was described as 'the sabotageur of national unity', and Adolf insulted him. He thereupon submitted his resignation. The Ministers of Finance and of Trade, Count Schwerin-Krosigh and Herr Eltz von Rubenach, also submitted their resignations. Blomberg did not flinch, but on the whole the pillar of reaction seemed to be tottering.

Adolf need only have taken one further step to have created a *fait accompli*, but Roehm, the soul of the revolutionary movement, was absent, and Blomberg and even Goering remained silent.

Hitler was upset by the resignations on the one hand and the silence on the other. Might there not be a plot against him? Though the 'drummer of the revolution' had become Chancellor of the Reich, he had not really changed since November 9, 1923. He still needed approbation and applause. Where was he to take refuge? Only Roehm and Goebbels were faithful to him. He made up his mind to deal once and for all with the reactionary gentlemen, if not to-morrow, then next day or next week.

His immediate need was the President's consent to the formation of a new Cabinet built on real Nazi lines.

On June 21 Hitler went to Neudeck, where the President lived. Hindenburg was already a very sick man. Hitler was accompanied by Goebbels, by Hofmann, the photographer, and by Herr Schreck, the leader of the S.S. These three represented the radical wing of the party in South Germany.

They were received on the steps by two men in general's uniform; Blomberg, the Minister of War and Goering. Adolf was stupefied.

'Having been informed of events by Vice-Chancellor von Papen,' General Blomberg said with great dignity, 'President Hindenburg summoned General Goering, in his capacity of Chief of Police, and myself to Neu-

deck. Our instructions are to consult with you on the measures to be taken to ensure internal peace. If a complete relaxation of tension does not immediately take place (and to this end we must avoid any ministerial crisis) martial law will be proclaimed. The President, being ill, deeply regrets being unable to receive you.'

Hitler and his companions were dumbfounded. Adolf was the first to speak.

'But it is absolutely essential that I see the President. I must see him, do you understand?'

Blomberg went away and returned a few minutes later.

'Please follow me,' he said to Hitler. 'These gentlement from Munich can wait.'

Marshal Hindenburg, in Blomberg's presence, briefly repeated to Adolf what Blomberg had already told him. The audience lasted exactly four minutes.

Hitler found himself on the steps again, the pitiless June sunlight accentuating his livid features. Frigid good-byes were exchanged. Blomberg and Goering remained at Neudeck.

Did not Goering belong to the Party? Did he not owe everything to Adolf? Yet he dared come out on the side of the Reichswehr and the police against the Party and the S.A. Blomberg and Goering against Hitler and Roehm . . .

Goebbels reflected. From the corner of his eye he watched Hitler pass from violent anger to complete prostration. The little cripple had betrayed Gregor

Strasser at Bamberg, he had betrayed Stennes in Berlin, and he would betray Adolf too if the latter were obstinate, for he knew that power was on the side of the Reichswehr . . . But Hitler must realize that too . . . Hitler would reflect, he had already reflected, he would go back on his original intentions. Goebbels was sure of it. Only one petty act of treachery would be necessary, and the Minister of Propaganda cheerfully reconciled himself to it. What, after all, had he promised Roehm? Nothing at all. Roehm must be sacrificed.

Adolf could not think with the rapidity of his favourite of the moment, but he duly weighed up the situation. One might again defer a decision, and await the old President's death. An attack at this moment might compromise the whole future. But that would mean forgiving von Papen and company, tolerating their audacity, their arrogance, their insubordination. It would be madness for the S.A. to attempt to oppose the Reichswehr and the police. Goering had betrayed him. And after all, was he sure of the S.A.? Was he sure of the brutal and exigent Roehm?

Roehm waited at Munich for the Führer's orders, which did not come, even after the Chancellor's visit to Neudeck. All the newspapers said was that its character was very formal.

What was happening? Goebbels' reports continued to be optimistic, but Hitler's silence was disturbing all the same. Roehm informed Adolf that it was essential to hold a meeting of the S.A. leaders, and the Führer's

presence was indispensable. Hitler consented; he did more, for he sent the following telegram, the original of which was shown to me by a deputy S.A. group-leader:

> 'All leaders and sub-leaders of S.A. groups will attend a meeting at General Headquarters of the Chief of Staff at Wiessee on June 30 at 10 o'clock. Adolf Hitler.'

Roehm had taken a year's lease of a room at Wiessee. Immediately on receiving Hitler's reply he went to the village inn and booked a number of rooms for June 29. He even ordered a vegetarian lunch for Adolf. I learned these details from responsible witnesses.

Hitler had seen Papen and made a provisional peace with him, for the idea of unloosing the S.A. on a *bloc* as powerful as that of all the German conservatives combined was obviously far too dangerous. The Chancellor wanted to play for time; still torn by cruel perplexities, he fulfilled an engagement to visit the Krupp factories in the Rhineland.

But Krupp and Goering were allies. A momentary armistice was not enough for them. They insisted on finishing with these men of the 'second revolution', and they wanted immediate action.

Krupp threatened to withdraw if the 'National Bolsheviks' were not silenced, and in Berlin Goering was active. He knew that the President had decided to proclaim martial law if Hitler did not yield. He had hated Roehm ever since November 9, 1923, when

Roehm had accused him of cowardice; he knew of the rivalry between Himmler and Roehm, and was certain that Himmler would act without hesitation; and he was not worried about Goebbels, who could always be won over to the stronger side. As chief of the Berlin police he had no difficulty in procuring evidence compromising Roehm; a dossier was quickly prepared and placed before the Führer.

Hitler was led to suppose that Roehm was planning a rising, not against the Reichswehr or the industrialists but against him, the Führer himself.

New 'despatches from Ems' were fabricated; the imaginary danger grew. Meanwhile a genuine telegram arrived from Roehm, couched in the terms of an ultimatum. The S.A. Chief of Staff demanded a rapid decision.

Hitler replied in sibylline words: 'Definite decisions,' he said, 'will be made at the leaders' meeting.'

Roehm was not surprised at Adolf's hesitancy, and proceeded with the organization of his meeting at Wiessee. There were more guests than usual at the inn. Strange to say, the whole first floor was taken by tourists from Berlin. These were in reality agents of Goering's Gestapo, but Roehm had no reasons for suspicion, and was perfectly satisfied with his rooms on the ground floor.

On the evening of June 29 Goebbels sent a report to the Führer.

'Roehm must be officially dismissed before July 1. This is Hindenburg's wish. If all necessary measures

are not taken within twenty-four hours the Reichswehr will disarm the S.A. and will not hesitate to overthrow Hitler himself!'

What was Adolf to do? Wait for Goering to carry out his threat?

Let us carefully examine the speeches in which Hitler tried to justify himself after the event.

'At two o'clock in the morning I received from Berlin and Munich two urgent and alarming messages. I learned in the first place that the alarm was to be given in Berlin at four o'clock, that trucks had been ordered for the transport of shock-troops, and that at five o'clock the assault and occupation of government buildings was to begin.

'With this in view S.A. Groupleader Ernst did not go to Wiessee, but stayed in Berlin to direct the *coup* in person.

'In the second place I learned that the Munich S.A. had already been warned at nine o'clock, when they were not allowed to return home, but lodged in emergency quarters.'

All this news unquestionably came from Goering, and it was false. A Bremen newspaper, badly primed by the Ministry of Propaganda, innocently stated on July 3:

'The S.A. leader Ernst, who was arrested on June 30 at Bremen together with his adjutant Kirschbaum, was taken to Berlin by aeroplane. Frau Ernst was arrested at Bremen at the same time, but was released on July 2.'

Ernst, in other words, was taken to Berlin in a special aeroplane by order of the Gestapo. Hitler's lie was all the more flagrant to those who knew, as I did, that Ernst was on the point of sailing on a honeymoon trip to the Azores, and that cabins had been booked for him for some time. In fact so ignorant was Ernst of what was happening to him that when the firing squad formed up in front of him he shouted '*Heil Hitler!*' as a last protest against the conspirators of the Right.

In short, Goebbels' last reports and Goering's cries of alarm got the better of Hitler's hesitations. He telephoned to Wagner, his devoted Bavarian Minister, and gave him instructions, and flew to Munich with Goebbels.

The following details were given to me by eye-witnesses; men who were at Wiessee and subsequently escaped from Germany, S.A. men in flight, a friend of the aviator Udet, and a gaoler in my brother's prison.

The Minister and *Gauleiter* Wagner ordered all the S.A. leaders present in Munich to meet at the Ministry of the Interior to receive Hitler in state. They took their places round a table, and a killer sat beside each one of them. There was wine, beer and talk. The hours passed. Dawn came and the telephone rang. The Führer had reached the aerodrome. Wagner gave the signal and the S.A. men were instantly overpowered and disarmed by their neighbours, who proceeded systematically to strike them down with revolver butts and beer bottles.

Only one managed to survive. This was the aviator

Udet, of the S.A. air squadron, who escaped into the corridors of the Ministry, where he wandered, mad with fear, anger and horror. He met Hitler and did not mince his words.

'Have you gone out of your mind?' he yelled. 'What have you against us? Roehm has done nothing, and he is our leader.'

Sweat was pouring from Hitler's brow.

'Nothing, nothing, no one will harm a hair on your head,' he stammered.

And Udet was allowed to go unmolested. He was even able to go on living in Germany, where he now has an important post.

After this incident Hitler, livid with rage, entered the room where the massacre had taken place. The chief killers of Munich, Wagner, Esser, Maurice, Weber and Buch, were standing on guard at the door, proud of having done their duty. Nine corpses were stretched on the floor, stabbed, or with broken skulls. Among them were Schneidhuber, Schmitt and Du Moulin.

But in his broadcast speech of July 1 Goebbels had the insolence to say that 'the Führer advanced *alone* towards Schmitt, Schneidhuber and the others and tore off their epaulets.'

The liquidation at the Ministry of the Interior having been completed, the next objective was Wiessee. Hitler's bullet-proof car was waiting, and it set off with its escort of Black Guards. Maurice, Dietrich, Schaub and Brückner led the way.

The inn at Wiessee was quickly surrounded. The policemen from Berlin were ready and waiting at their first-floor windows. On the ground floor the 'dangerous rebels' were peacefully asleep. Room No. 5 was the first to be entered, and Count Spretti, chief of the Munich *Standarte*, was arrested in his bed. Heines, who shared room No. 9 and his bed with his chauffeur, suddenly found himself gazing down the barrels of Brückner's and Maurice's revolvers. He felt for his own weapon, but was stunned by a revolver butt and dragged out in his pyjamas. Two shots rang out and Heines and his chauffeur had been eliminated.

Hitler then went to room No. 7. The conversation that followed was repeated to me verbatim.

'Who's there?' Roehm asked in a sleepy voice.

'It's I, Hitler, open the door at once!'

'What! Already? I didn't expect you till midday!'

Roehm rose, opened the door and recoiled. Hitler overwhelmed him with a volley of abuse. Roehm, shocked into silence, ended by replying vigorously.

The door shut. The two men talked alone, then Adolf reappeared.

'Bind him,' he said.

In the corridor, with arms and legs bound, Roehm waited for his friend's decision.

The landlord saw him, raised his arm and naïvely exclaimed '*Heil Hitler!*' Roehm, with a tired expression, replied with the traditional greeting of South Germany: '*Grüss Gott!*'

Hitler then apologized to the landlord for the dis-

turbance and took the road to Munich with Uhl, who was also wakened from sleep and bound, and Roehm, that 'rebel' who was so 'dangerous' that he had not even provided himself with a bodyguard.

'I surprised the revolutionaries,' Hitler said in his Reichstag speech after that sinister day, referring to Roehm and his friends. But had he not himself authorized them to meet? Had he not promised to attend their meeting? What was the surprise? Their private vices? He had known all about them for years. Hitler surprised a gang of conspirators who wove their plots against him in bed. They were fast alseep. What prowess!

All the cars of the S.A. leaders on their way to Roehm's meeting at Wiessee were stopped by the S.S. and their occupants arrested.

Hess had taken over the Brown House at Munich. The S.A. guard was imprisoned and replaced by S.S. men.

The day of reckoning had come. Paler than the night before, Adolf went to the prison yard at Stadlheim. He looked at the prisoners lined up there. They were his old comrades-in-arms, and several were heroes of the Great War. 'Dogs!' he shouted at them, 'Traitors! Let them die, every one of them!'

And Buch noted against the name of each, death, death, death.

Here were Peter von Heydebreck, a brave officer, the hero of Annaberg; Wilhelm Hayn, also an ex-officer, a hero of the Baltic; Fritz, Ritter von Krausser,

who had been decorated with the Order of Max-Joseph; all these and many more faced the S.S. firing squad that day.

Roehm, in a cell facing on the prison-yard, was able to watch the massacre of his friends and colleagues. An hour before he had been a Minister of the Reich and Chief of Staff of the S.A. But now he was a prisoner in a cell, and a revolver had been left on his table.

'You are an officer, and you know what there is left for you to do,' they had said when they left him.

But Roehm had shouted at the top of his voice, so that it carried far beyond the prison yard where his friends were being massacred:

'No, I shall not render Adolf that service! If he wants to kill me let him take the responsibility for it!'

Roehm was murdered in prison by order of the man who had written to him six months earlier:

> 'I want to thank you, dear Ernst Roehm, for the imperishable services that you have rendered to the National-Socialist movement and the German people; and to assure you that I am grateful to destiny for having men such as you as friends and comrades-in-arms.
>
> 'Your Adolf Hitler.'

The United Press talked of a hundred and twenty deaths at Munich. I myself believe that this figure is far short of the truth. Meanwhile Goering in Berlin

was imitating and surpassing the brilliant example set him in Bavaria. The Munich murders were the impulsive actions of a man who had lost his reason. The list of victims in Berlin and the provinces had been carefully and systematically thought out in advance.

'I enlarged the sphere of action of the purge,' Goering ingenuously confessed on July 1.

Enlarged the sphere of action of the purge, Herr Goering? You mean you multiplied it by ten, if not by a hundred. When the wild beast Goering is let loose there is little that can stop him.

Goering received no orders to kill his hundreds of victims in Prussia. Under the mask of political assassination, he committed a hundred acts of private vengeance, settling old scores, ridding himself of inconvenient friends.

Let us mention only his most flagrant crimes.

The 'plot' organized by Schleicher, Roehm, my brother Gregor and General Bredow was a lie. The story that General Bredow sent secret reports to M. François-Poncet, the French Ambassador, was a lie.

These patriots were later accused by Hitler of having committed high treason. But they were never put on trial and no evidence against them has ever been produced. They were seized in their own homes, taken to prison and murdered.

The details of von Schleicher's murder are well-known. He was peacefully reading a newspaper when six thugs forced their way into his villa, pushing past

the maid, and entered the drawing-room. The general's back was turned.

'Are you General Schleicher?'

He turned and faced them.

'Yes,' he said.

Six revolvers rang out and the General fell. His wife rushed towards him, shrieked and fainted. The killers then turned their revolvers on her.

General Bredow learned of his friend's death on the same evening. He went home, with no thought of concealment. Was that a likely thing for a man compromised in a plot with a foreign Power to do? He met the Gestapo executioners on his doorstep. Two revolver-shots echoed through the night, and the general joined the other victims.

My brother Gregor was having lunch with his family when eight Gestapo men came and took him away without any explanation. He was taken to the Prinz Albrechtstrasse prison and thrown into a cell. After twelve hours of solitude, darkness and uncertainty, he suddenly saw a revolver pointed at him through the grating. The first shot missed, and Gregor took refuge in a corner of the cell; but three gunmen, including Heydrich and Eicke, the killer now in charge of all the concentration camps in Germany, came in, and Gregor, riddled with bullets, fell to the ground. He was still breathing when Heydrich administered the *coup-de-grâce* with a shot in the back of the head.

I had these details from the man who wiped the

blood from the walls and removed the traces of the shooting. He was able to escape after the execution, and joined me in Prague.

Schleicher, Gregor, and Bredow were only the first of a long list of victims.

Himmler commanded the firing squad.

Men were seized and taken to Lichterfeld, the former Prussian cadet school in Berlin, and lined up against a wall.

'Fire! Fire! Fire!'

Ditten and Gehrt, Beluwitz and Märker, Mohrenschild and Karl Koch, Heck, Krausse, Schröder, Schreiber — I could name hundreds of them, men I knew who died that day.

As long as the massacre continued the newspapers were forbidden to publish a single line about it. A year later there were still people in Hamburg who did not know whether their friends in Munich, Berlin or elsewhere were still alive.

Klausener and several other Catholic leaders were executed, as well as von Papen's secretaries.

At Hirschberg, in Silesia, all the Jews, all the members of the Stahlhelm, and a few Communists were arrested, taken to the barrack-square and lined up with their faces to the wall. Anyone who moved, or spoke, or staggered, was beaten with rifle-butts. At two o'clock at night the prisoners were pushed into lorries. They were told that their interrogation would take place at Görlitz.

One of the vehicles stopped in the forest.

'There's a breakdown,' the driver said. 'Get out!'

The prisoners obeyed. A volley of revolver-shots rang out, and a few of the prisoners screamed. In all eight people were murdered there.

'They tried to escape,' an S.S. man explained, climbing back into the lorry.

Among the dead was a man of sixty-six and a woman who could scarcely walk.

Hitler had the effrontery to state in the Reichstag that there were sixty-three executions of S.A. and S.S. men and fourteen executions of civilians. My only reply is that my brother's urn was No. 16, while that of Hoffmann-Stettin, sent to his widow on July 10, was No. 262.

If the persecutions of Catholics are excepted, as well as the sheer errors, such as that concerning Dr. Willy Schmidt, who was murdered because he happened to have the same name as one of the S.A. leaders (the mistake did not enable the latter to escape his fate) the murders could be divided into two distinct categories. The first consisted of victims of the reaction. The second, and this was even more appalling, consisted of persons killed solely for motives of personal vengeance.

Adolf is as guilty as Goering. Hermann, more brutal, more direct in his methods, has an infinitely larger number of deaths on his conscience. But Hitler, vindictive, cunning and sly, used the June 30

blood-bath to wipe out scores that dated back eleven years.

It is common knowledge that von Kahr, an old man of sixty-three, who had retired two years previously, was torn from his bed, taken to Dachau and tortured to death. His mutilated body was found three days later in a swamp near the concentration camp. His crime had been his failure to support the Munich *putsch* in 1923.

Ballerstaedt, who had opposed a violent raid made by the Nazis on a Munich meeting, and had been instrumental in Hitler's being sentenced to three months' imprisonment, was murdered by a special killer squad.

We have already mentioned that death was the penalty paid by Father Staempfle for having edited *Mein Kampf*, and therefore being familiar with the author's weaknesses.

I spent days drawing up lists of the dead. Details of fresh atrocities were constantly brought to me by my agents.

In the course of my investigations, I came across the name of a well-known journalist, Gehrlich, whose murder at first seemed quite incomprehensible. Why was this poor man, who had been in prison since Hitler's accession to power, shot now?

The explanation of the mystery was bound up with a still more atrocious crime, the details of which I did not learn until two years later.

My brother Gregor's murder was a terrible blow to

me. Afterwards my most earnest desire was to see my brother Paul, who practically knew Gregor's last thoughts. I wanted to learn and to understand, to put myself in a better position to judge Adolf's guilt.

Paul, like Gregor and myself, was an officer during the Great War. In August, 1918, he was in command of a battery which succeeded in recrossing the Marne at Dormans and maintained itself there for forty-eight hours. He was badly wounded in the course of this engagement, and after the War he took orders and became a Benedictine.

After the June 30 massacre Paul went to Rome. I kept up a lively correspondence with him and was impatient to see him. Two years passed, however, before we met in Austria in the spring of 1935, and spent a few days together.

'And to think,' Paul murmured one evening, 'that Gregor once stopped Hitler from committing suicide.'

'When was that?' I asked, not very attentively.

Paul hesitated, then continued in a low voice:

'After Hitler murdered his niece Gely.'

At this I started.

'Did Gregor tell you that too?'

Paul nodded.

'I swore to keep it secret. Gregor spent three days and three nights with Adolf, who was like a madman. He shot her during a quarrel. Perhaps he did not realize what he was doing. As soon as he had done it he wanted to commit suicide, but Gregor prevented him.'

I wanted further details.

'Do you know who was there at the time of the murder, and how it happened?'

'I know nothing more. Gregor did not tell me any more. He told me this during a fit of profound depression, and I kept the secret as long as he lived.'

'But Paul, in 1931 Hitler was a nobody. How did he escape justice? Didn't Gregor tell you that?'

'An inquest was opened at Munich. The public prosecutor, who has lived abroad since Hitler's accession to power, wished to charge him with murder, but Gürtner, the Bavarian Minister of Justice, stopped the case. It was announced that Gely had committed suicide.'

'Gürtner again!' I exclaimed. 'Always Gürtner! Did no one else know about it?'

Meanwhile Gürtner had become Reich Minister of Justice.

'Yes, there was someone else,' Paul replied. 'He was murdered on the same day as Gregor. You remember Gehrlich, the editor of the *Right Way*? He made a private investigation at the same time as the police, and collected overwhelming evidence against Hitler. Voss, Gregor's lawyer, no doubt knew all about it too. He had all our brother's secret papers at his house, but he was killed like Gehrlich.'

Nine years have passed since Gely's death; six years have passed since a madman and a brute gave the signal for Germany's St. Bartholomew.

In November, 1939, I was in Paris, where I wrote

several articles for *Le Journal*, mentioning Gely's death and Hitler's guilt.

Three days later the editor of the *Courrier d'Autriche* called on me.

'Do you know Father Pant?' he asked.

'No, not personally, but I know that he lived in Munich, and that he was the brother of the prelate and Senator Pant, the former leader of the anti-Nazi Germans in Poland.'

'Yes,' he said. 'Father Pant is now in exile, but he asks me to send you the following message, which I repeat verbatim:

' "It was I who buried Angela Raubal, the little Gely of whom Otto Strasser wrote. They pretended that she committed suicide; I should never have allowed a suicide to be buried in consecrated ground. From the fact that I gave her Christian burial you can draw conclusions which I cannot communicate to you." '

CHAPTER XI

HITLER, MASTER OF EUROPE

THERE can be no doubt that June 30 was the decisive date for Hitler's régime. On that day, Adolf made his choice — for war.

The National-Socialist revolution in Germany might have been the path leading to the consolidation of European peace. But to the Chancellor National-Socialism was a meaningless phrase. He understood neither its real potentialities nor its fundamental principles; and he feared its results. Like a prudent apprentice magician, he was afraid of being unable to control the forces he had himself released. In his fear of an unknown future he took refuge in the past. He rejected his vague revolutionary aims for the concrete realities of Pan-Germanism, Prussianism and their imperialist aims.

Perhaps he believed he would be able to turn back when circumstances seemed opportune; perhaps he still believed he would be able to master events. But there is a logic of facts against which the human will is powerless.

Both economically and politically the developments that followed the massacre of the men of the Second Revolution were bound inevitably to lead to catastrophe.

In mid-July Hitler offered Schacht, the president of the Reichsbank, the Ministry of National Economy. Finance and industry were brought under unified control, and rearmament began.

On March 16, 1935, compulsory military service was reintroduced.

On March 7, 1936, the remilitarization of the Rhineland took place.

On August 24, 1936, the period of military service was extended to two years.

The year 1937 was full of important events in foreign politics. The Rome-Berlin axis was formed, the anti-Comintern pact was signed and Germany intervened in the Spanish Civil War. The stage was set for the triumphs of 1938.

In March, 1938, Hitler's troops occupied Vienna. The strategic and political reasons for the seizure of Austria are well-known, but Hitler also had a secret motive which has never been sufficiently appreciated. He had to make Austria German in order to cease to be a foreigner in Germany himself.

After the acquisition of Vienna, Adolf cast a greedy eye on Prague. In September, 1938, he occupied the Sudetenland, and on March 15, 1939, German troops marched into the Czech capital. A few days later they occupied Memel, and the propaganda campaign against Poland immediately began.

All this took place according to a well-established plan. Although certain incidents retarded it, Adolf Hitler never lost this plan from sight.

In September, 1939, the German army crossed the Polish frontier, and this time war broke out on two fronts.

The ultimate consequences of these repeated acts of aggression did not come within the dictator's vision. During all these years his unchanging political ambition had been an alliance of Germany with Italy and Britain against Russia and France. In this he found himself in agreement with the Pan-Germans and in partial opposition to the real Prussians. The latter, represented by the Junker clique from which the officers of the army were recruited, were in favour of a Russian alliance. They had a centre at Bonn, a students' organization known as the 'Borussians', a name that stresses the similarity of race between the Slavs of the U.S.S.R. and those of the banks of the Spree.

For centuries all self-respecting Prussians had recognized only three enemies — France, Austria and Poland, the three Powers that threatened them.

But in 1871, when German capitalism was born and German foreign trade started its expansion, a new idea was born in the minds of the National-Liberals, who were supported by heavy industry and high finance. This idea was Pan-Germanism.

Pan-Germanism aimed at European domination. It preached an alliance with England in the interests of foreign trade, and was fiercely hostile both to Russia and France.

Hitler had moved a long way from the National-Socialist programme, which certainly demanded

liberty and the reunion of the different branches of the German race, but at the same time aimed at making Germany a member of the great European family, faithful in that respect to the watchword of its spiritual leader Möller van den Bruck, who said: 'We were Teutons, we are Germans, we shall be Europeans.'

Hitler, having renounced the Nationalist-Social ideal, gravitated more and more into the reactionary orbit. Not only was he dependent on them financially, not only had he jettisoned his domestic political ideas for their sake; but he now found them sympathetic politicians, unalarmed and undismayed by his crazy ideas of world domination.

He could not, however, cast aside his mask overnight. His native political sense told him that he must still use his revolutionary slogans in order not to lose the confidence of his followers.

He still talked of socialism after appointing Schacht Minister of National Economy.

He still talked of *Völksgemeinschaft*, the community of the German people, while throwing hundreds of thousands of them into concentration camps.

He still talked of peaceful methods while violating the Czechs.

He still talked of peace while he was unleashing war.

Duplicity? The word is both too weak and too strong. Adolf had not ceased to feel what the German people wanted. He talked of socialism, of *Völksgemeinschaft*, of peace, because his followers and the whole of Germany wanted socialism, *Völksgemeinschaft*, peace.

But his acts were in flagrant contradiction with his words, for his mad idea of European domination was exploited now by the clique of Pan-German industrialists, now by that of the Prussian Junkers, who used him, just as they had used the Kaiser before him, for the prosecution of their perennial aims.

It seems to me essential at this point to refute the doctrine which attributes vast political designs to Adolf, long-thought-out plans all leading up to the present alliance with Stalin. It is my own conviction that the events of the last few months actually represent the complete collapse of Adolf's real ideas. I have no hesitation in calling Adolf 'Britain's unsuccessful suitor'.

One thing and one thing only mattered to him in the field of foreign politics. He talked about it to me the last time I saw him, and in the last ten years he has not changed. His dream was an alliance with England in order to dominate Europe. 'The land for us, the seas for England,' he said.

During the period when I used to see Adolf frequently, I developed the habit of noting down things that he said, phrases of his that struck me, as soon as I reached home. After breaking with him I conscientiously continued the habit of noting down 'the sayings of Adolf' which were brought to me by certain persons in contact with him.

I thus know that at the end of 1938 he had not abandoned his hope of finding a basis of understanding with England, and that, in spite of all that

he may say to-day, his hatred of France remains unchanged.

'There can be only a single Great Power in Europe,' he said to me one day, 'and Germany, the most Aryan country, must become that Power. The other nations are all mongrels, and therefore cannot aspire to domination of the various peoples of our Continent.

'We do not need a colonial empire, which would be useless to us, and would only involve us in an unnecessary quarrel with Britain. Britain must, by the very nature of things, be our ally. Everything points to it. The two essential factors are similarity of race, and the harmony of interests on both sides. If we leave the seas to England, the Continent of Europe will be ours.

'Don't talk to me of pre-War politics. With an Anglo-German alliance the world could be renewed and France reduced to nothing. Our mortal enemy would be isolated. France, that country of "negroids", would fall into the decline she has deserved a thousand times, were it for her colonial policy alone.

'When the time comes for settling accounts with France the Treaty of Versailles will be child's play in comparison with the terms that we shall impose on her. But for that we must have England with us.'

Later, after his accession to power, he said to a member of his entourage who had remained faithful to me:

'The putrefying corpse which is Russia will never be an effective ally for France.

'If war broke out we should not wait three years before signing a Peace of Brest-Litovsk. When Jews and Communists are allied, destruction is near at hand.'

In 1936, after signing the agreement of July 11 with Austria, he said:

'The march towards the East is happening in spite of everything. Vienna is only a stage towards it. The colossus with feet of clay must be destroyed, and Russia must cease to be a European Power.'

In 1937 he had a long talk with a foreign industrialist to whom he gave an audience.

'Colonies are of very little interest to me,' he said, 'I should like England to understand that. If she left me a free hand in the East, I should even renounce enlarging my merchant fleet. How is it that England does not realize that her only enemy is France?'

And in 1936, shortly after the Duce's visit, he said:

'So-called patriots accuse me of treason because I have renounced the South Tyrol. Quarrels cannot go on for ever. To claim the South Tyrol would be to commit a crime equal to interfering with British colonial policy. During the last war Germany gambled on a revolution in India. No country is better suited to govern India than the British. I am not interested in the Hindus. Britain will have to be on her knees before renouncing them.

'If I had found a single man of my own mettle in England, an Anglo-German alliance would already

have been signed, and Germany would be the mistress of Europe.'

Finally, at the beginning of 1939, Hitler said to General von Fritsch, who advocated a Russian alliance:

'An alliance between Germany and Russia would not only be the signal for war; it would be the beginning of the end for Germany.'

Thus, in spite of his apparent evolution, Hitler's fundamental ideas had remained unchanged since he wrote *Mein Kampf* with Father Staempfle's assistance. At the time when an unauthorized edition of *Mein Kampf* appeared in France his faith in a British alliance was slightly shaken; he forbade the sale of the book and issued a special expurgated edition for the benefit of the French.

But if his political ideas had really undergone any change he would certainly have revised the German version of *Mein Kampf*, which had become the German Bible. He did not do so, however, and the last edition, printed in 1939, is identical with that of 1926.

The attraction that England exercised over Hitler was based equally on his racial mania and his conviction that only British friendship would enable him to carry out his Imperialist designs. The former occupies the place in his mind that the class struggle occupies in the mind of the Marxist. Those who allow themselves to be blinded by such obsessions cannot possibly see clearly in foreign politics.

I remember a conversation I had with a British

diplomat accredited to Berlin. Unfortunately I cannot reveal his name.

'I have seen Hitler,' he said to me on the telephone one day. 'When can we meet?'

I asked him if I might bring my friend Buchrucker with me, and we met at the club.

'In the first place,' he began, 'your Adolf started by bowing a little too low. I thought I was visiting a star, but I found myself face-to-face with nothing but a little *soubrette.*

'Rosenberg was there and we naturally talked foreign politics. Curiously enough, this future European Minister of Foreign Affairs does not know a word of French or English.

'Hitler suggested an Anglo-German alliance, because, he shouted excitedly, "The Nordic races must rule the others and share the world". '

'And what did you reply?' I asked.

'I told him that vast and extravagant projects of this kind conveyed no precise meaning to me. England, I said was an old country, with a foreign policy several centuries old. In 1801 we smashed the fleet of Nordic Denmark and bombarded Copenhagen; in 1914 we armed the Aryan Sikhs against the Nordic Germans. Dogmatic attitudes on this question appeared illusory to us; we defended our national interests.'

But the powerful national interests of others are things that Hitler, obsessed with a passion for the domination of Europe, will never understand.

I met Hitler in 1927, at Dinkelsbühl, after my father's funeral, and we talked of the great men of history. Great men in Hitler's eyes were nothing but great conquerors.

It was natural in that neighbourhood for the conversation to turn to the terrible struggle between Wallenstein and Richelieu.

'No, Richelieu was not a great man,' Hitler excitedly exclaimed. 'France has had only one great man, Napoleon, and he was an Italian!'

'But what about Rabelais, Herr Hitler?'

He looked at me in stupefaction, and passed his hand across his brow.

I knew perfectly well that Adolf had probably never heard of Rabelais, and I did not mean this sally very seriously.

I explained that to me Rabelais represented French *joie de vivre*, the art of enjoying life, the love of good cheer, wine and women. Adolf made a gesture of disgust and continued:

'Let us talk seriously. Can you name any great Frenchmen?'

'Let me see,' I answered, 'Richelieu, Henry IV, Danton, Clemenceau.'

'They were all mediocrities, lacking in ambition and big ideas,' Adolf replied. 'They were not Titans. Their dreams did not go beyond their limited horizon.'

'Self-restraint is one of the main attributes of a great man; it is the only thing that differentiates him from Utopians and madmen,' I pointed out. 'The man who

is unaware of his own limitations inevitably crashes, and drags everything else down with him. Look at Charles V, Napoleon or that megalomaniac Wilhelm II.'

'Nevertheless the idea of one nation called upon to rule the others is rooted in the mind of every great man. Germany is called upon to succeed where others have failed.'

'No, Herr Hitler, you refuse to recognize that a nation's first instinct is that of liberty. This instinct in the long run will always prove stronger than any man's "will to power". And finally you forget that the desire to subdue foreign peoples is contrary to the fundamental principle of National-Socialism.'

Hitler naïvely explained that it would be the duty of Germany's leaders in the years to come to organize the Reich on Spartan lines to prepare her for the hegemony of Europe.

'The German people alone will be a people of warriors; the other nations will be helots, working for the Teuton warrior caste. Our sword will guarantee their peace, and will be the recompense for their labour. There will no longer be five, six or eight Great Powers in Europe; there will only be one all-powerful Germany.'

I objected that such a project could only be realized after a series of wars.

'No,' he replied, 'Europe is rotten; but what will war matter if afterwards eternal peace is guaranteed by the German sword?'

'You must surely know that even Sparta did not succeed in establishing her dictatorship over Athens,' I replied, 'but that as a result of their quarrels democratic Athens and grim Sparta alike fell a prey to foreign barbarians. Have you read Clemenceau's *Demosthenes*? Do you know the *Philippics*? Unity was the only thing that could have saved Greece, and unity is the only thing that can save Europe. A good National-Socialist must be a European; he must contribute to European solidarity.'

'There is no solidarity in Europe; there is only submission. Sparta failed because she lacked a tyrant, and because she was governed by a clique of incapable aristocrats.'

The question of interest to-day is why Hitler renounced his dream of friendship with England and consented to become an ally of the U.S.S.R.; why he yielded to his Minister von Ribbentrop, who belongs to the group of Junkers and militarists in whom the Prussian political spirit is embodied. A secret report on the leading circles in the army, dated December 12, 1939, throws some light on this point. The following is quoted from it:

'. . . Let there be no misunderstanding. What has happened and is happening in regard to Poland, as well as Russia, is solely the result of military policy. Hitler played the rôle of a puppet. The Gestapo is the

instrument of terror necessary to carry the generals' plans into effect.

'When the generals marched into Poland they believed, in spite of French and British declarations, that the campaign would end rapidly in their favour and that there would be no war.

'Before all this was as clear as it is to-day, I informed you that if Hitler or his men had dared to do the least thing against Russia they would have been arrested and shot for high treason. Hitler chose the right road before it was too late.

'I warn you that other surprises must be expected. The whole world has its eyes fixed on Russia, which is now at Germany's gates. Everyone is extremely nervous, but the German generals are not. I have no need to tell you what they think of the Italian alliance; in army circles this is regarded merely as an expedient, and a temporary one.'

The pressure exercised on Adolf Hitler by the German army emerges clearly from this report. Personally I have never doubted it. Hindenburg's spirit still survives in Germany. But this single factor would not have been sufficient to deflect Adolf from his great idea. He would never have renounced his hatred of the Bolsheviks, nor would his immediate entourage have consented to it, if the hollowness of his ideas had not suddenly been revealed.

France was not a 'mongrel' and spineless country, lacking interior unity; she had no desire to repeat her tragic error of Sadowa by sacrificing Poland.

The British were unimpressed by their German cousins' protestations of friendship. The German promise to leave Britain her mastery of the seas did not persuade her to avert her eyes from the Continent; and the German danger seemed more formidable to Britain than the French.

Finally Poland proved to Hitler that a nation's desire for liberty can make them go to desperate lengths.

Blue Books, Yellow Books or White Books will never give the measure of Hitler's disappointment when Britain and France entered the war. When he signed his pact with Russia he still hoped that he was only taking a provisional step; he believed that he still retained his future freedom of action. He still has moments when he believes that, thanks to Goering and his friend Stinnes, he will be able to win England over to his side.

Nevertheless his dreams of European domination remain unaltered. Since England refuses to understand him, he has decided that she must suffer the fate of the other subject populations, reduced to helotry in the service of Spartan Germany.

Animated by a deep love of my country, and a deep attachment to the European idea, convinced that Germany must live in order that Europe may live, I hereby denounce Hitler's monstrous plans of domination. Whatsoever Hitler promises, or his friends promise, he desires one thing and one thing only, and that is to force Europe to its knees, to reign over the Continent as its absolute master and to tyrannize over other nations as he tyrannizes over Germany.

CHAPTER XII

THE FUTURE AGAINST HITLER

THE terrible threat to the West represented by the Russo-Prussian combination can only be compared to the menace of the Avars, the Mongols and the Turks in the ninth, thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. But the past teaches us that the peoples of Europe draw from their religion and their desire for liberty the regenerative strength that enables them to resist and break the barbarian assault.

'God tries those He loves.' The Christian precept reminds us that a menace can be a means of salvation, that it can awaken, in individuals and in nations alike, vital forces that in periods of satiety, materialism and nihilism may have seemed to be dead.

Hitler, the racialist, and Stalin, the Marxist, have never felt or understood the moral law of such a revival. Strong in their mad materialism, they believe men's souls are dead, that millions are ready to accept slavery so long as their bodies are nourished. But there are other problems in the lives of nations than those of unemployment, the class-struggle, race, and *Lebensraum.* Ideals of liberty, honour, and faith are still capable of moving people and making them rise against the most deadly perils. Hitler and Stalin have failed to recog-

nize this truth, because faith, honour and liberty are meaningless words for them.

It was with surprise and delight that foreign observers watched the changes that took place in France and England after the famous Munich Agreement. But Hitler refused to recognize them, and persisted in believing that France was rotten and England impotent.

Towards the end of 1937, Herr von Neurath, the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, asked his ambassadors in France, Italy and England to send him circumstantial and strictly objective reports on the situation in those countries. Adolf, however, had lost confidence in his Foreign Minister, and von Neurath complained bitterly that only Herr von Ribbentrop's advice was followed. The ambassadors' reports were submitted to Hitler, and they provoked a terrific outburst of rage.

'Your reports,' he said to von Neurath, 'are in direct contradiction with the confidential reports that I have received. Why this morbid pessimism? I know what to believe about France and England.'

Two months later von Neurath was succeeded by Joachim von Ribbentrop.

Count Welczek, then German Ambassador in Paris, had good reason to be alarmed at the way German policy was going.

Towards the middle of 1938 he asked his Military Attaché to approach the Führer and try to give him a truer picture of France and the French army.

The Military Attaché was summoned to Berlin, and his report was something like this:

'The French General Staff is of an extraordinarily high standard; the officers and non-commissioned officers are excellent; the *matériel*, particularly that of the motorized divisions, is first-class.

'The men have lost nothing of their military qualities. All in all, the French army of 1937 could be considered to be superior to that of 1917.'

After reading this report Hitler sent for the Military Attaché.

'Herr General,' he said, 'you are an old officer, you were defeated in 1918 and you are still labouring under the disagreeable impressions of your defeat. Get it into your head that not France but America defeated us. My private information confirms me in the conviction that there is neither courage nor initiative in the French army, which is riddled with Bolshevism. Mobilization could not take place without tremendous Communist disturbances; and even if mobilization were successfully completed, in the first battle the men would shoot their officers rather than us.'

The Attaché became eloquent.

'I can only put you on your guard against such ideas,' he replied. 'The reports you receive are false and dangerous. The young men who act as your observers lack experience. They speak English and French, but they know neither England nor France. In Paris they stroll up and down the Boulevards, and see a few parliamentarians and a few society people.

They are utterly ignorant of the real strength of France; they know nothing of French history, of the French provinces, or of the French corps of officers.'

'I forbid you, Herr General, to insult my best collaborators in this fashion. Their young eyes see more than the eyes of old officers blinded by prejudices.'

The Military Attaché thereupon offered his resignation, but Hitler refused it.

The man who described this interview to me was himself attached to the German Embassy in Paris, and when war broke out, rather than return to Berlin, he remained in a neutral country.

'There is no way of opening the Führer's eyes,' he confided to me last year. 'He refuses to see.'

'Then he hasn't changed at all,' I replied. 'When I used to work with him Hess used to stop me at the door and say, "For heaven's sake don't tell him this," or "for heaven's sake don't tell him that." He can't bear disagreeable news.'

Hitler turned a blind eye to what was really happening in France and England. He cannot, he will not see the evolution that is taking place to-day in the minds of the Italian and Spanish peoples; and he is even more blind to the profound changes at work among the German people.

Yet this 'Hitler and Germany' problem remains of the first importance from the political, moral, historical and ethical points of view.

The Nazi dictatorship lies over Germany like a thick

covering of ice over a river. The ice is an integral part of the river, and remains firm as long as the water nourishes and supports it. But one fine day the water separates itself from its covering of ice, and an empty space, invisible from the banks, results. The ice still seems as firm as in the past, but it can be smashed with a single blow of an axe.

This is an exact analogy of what has been slowly happening to the Nazi dictatorship since 1933. It would be foolish to deny that Hitler and his system were to a certain extent an expression of the German people, an illustration of its nature, a realization of its aspirations. But this can only be temporary. Does not ice need certain atmospheric conditions before its formation?

Under the immobile surface the river has remained alive. It is impossible to stop completely the evolution, the revolution of the German people. The feelings and aspirations of the masses, the will of those capable of independent judgment, have parted from the German dictatorship, or become alien to it. An empty space has formed between the water and the layer of ice. Fissures have already appeared.

After seven years of dictatorship the German prisons and concentration camps are fuller than during the first months. Is this *Völksgemeinschaft*, the communion of the people with its Führer? Is this symptomatic of the people's happiness and unity and unqualified admiration of the Führer's work?

Two million Germans have been or still are guests

in the cells of the Gestapo, or are or have been familiar with the delights of Dachau, Buchenwald or Oranienburg. These two millions have parents, wives, children. In other words about ten million human beings have suffered personally from Hitler's methods. Is one seriously to believe that the martyrs of the Hitler régime and their families love and admire Hitler? Is there anyone who does not know that the famous plebiscites in which Hitler has majorities exceeding 99 per cent are shams? Does anyone seriously accept the votes that are taken even in concentration camps under the threatening whips of the guards? Is it not astonishing that of 1,572 prisoners at Dachau as many as eight had the courage to vote against Hitler in 1934, and ten the temerity to submit blank voting papers. The two millions who have been in Hitler's prisons were the first combatants and the first casualties in a holy war against a scourge the danger of which so many other Germans, and so many other European peoples, only realized later.

Everyone is aware of the Nazi peril to-day, but for years a relatively small number of clear-sighted Germans fought against Hitler and Stalin alone. It took an alliance between these two executioners, and another outburst of Prussianism, to make Europe wake up.

The ferocious determination of the Prussian generals was illustrated in the report from which we quoted in the preceding chapter. Here is another quotation:

'The Bolshevik peril has never made any impression

on the German militarists. On the contrary, from the point of view of their caste, some of them find the Russian system ideal. They know that the Lenin period is past. The militarists know Russia better, and have had the opportunity of studying the evolution of its régime more closely, than so many of the people who have written books on the U.S.S.R. They know that the ruling class in Russia constitutes a new aristocracy. Private property has been abolished, but what of that? The ruling group rules, and lives very well. Above all it has power, and a huge apparatus which, unlike that of the Nazis, is bolstered up with an ideal. The fact that this ideal has become less radical does not render it ineffective.

'Perhaps we shall see the National-Bolshevism of Russia and Germany threatening the West from beyond the German frontiers. Then Mr. Chamberlain can have the ideological war that he refused to fight when there was still time. That is the last trump card that the Russo-German Allies have up their sleeve.

'During the last war the generals realized that anti-capitalism might change the face of the world. What would the people say if monster trials of the big captains of industry were suddenly staged, if the factories were expropriated, after their owners had been shot, as they were in Russia? The opposition could be won over by these measures and enslaved to the generals' will. Is there any doubt that such measures would cause troubles in other nations if they were skilfully exploited by propaganda?

'Bolshevism does not constitute a menace to the militarists; they prefer it to socialism with its "sickly pacifism". Bolshevism has never been pacifist, but militant and militaristic.

'The generals would regard a German adaptation of Bolshevism as their great opportunity. There are many of them to whom the nature of the régime under which they live matters not a jot, provided only that they can play their rôle. Let it never be forgotten that the Prussian officer is not brought up to be the instrument of a bourgeois government, as his counterpart is in France and England; he is accustomed to playing the leading rôle. The militarists needed Hitler to reach their goal, and during the last few years they were obliged to put up with many things. But all that is over now. Now the generals are in command, and they will only permit such changes as suit them.

'War must be made on England, who is their enemy of the moment. It will be a life-and-death struggle, but the generals are convinced that it will go better for them than in 1914.

'I mentioned just now the possibility of monster trials of captains of industry. The generals will go further than that. They know the power of the socialist idea, they are aware of what Gregor Strasser called "the masses' anti-capitalist dream", and of its attraction for the middle classes too. If they are to win the war, they will have to come forward with a programme to make the sacrifices involved worth-while. Hitler cannot come forward with this programme; they alone

can do it. This is the field in which we must expect surprises.

'What would the countries of the West say if monster trials of Nazi magnates were staged, accusing them of corruption and relations with foreign governments? The object of the latter would naturally be the saving of capitalism. What would our neighbours say if evidence were produced denouncing the rôle played by Western capitalists in this game?

'Hitler sees the danger. That is why he goes to the front so frequently. The other Nazi leaders do not visit the front, or rather they are not allowed to do so. The leading Nazis will be the first victims.'

The horrible visions that these secret plans of the Prussian generals call up in the mind of any good European should not paralyse us, but on the contrary, inspire us to resist and defeat them.

I call 'European' every human being conscious of our common heritage of Christianity, our common historical background and civilization, and the indivisibility of our economic life. Germany has always been a part of the European family, and this she will have to remain if Europe is not to stop at the Rhine — if, that is to say, Europe is to remain Europe.

The German people is said to be entirely devoted to its Führer.

Who is responsible for this assertion? The Nazi Press, the Nazi wireless, and Nazi agents all over the world. Let us not be deceived by them, or by the enthusiastic words of a few young German prisoners.

Enthusiasm is natural to youth, and these children have known no régime other than Hitler's.

No, the German people wants a German revolution, that is to say a national and social revolution.

The German people wants *Völksgemeinschaft*, the community of the people. It wants liberty at home, that is to say, democratic self-administration; it wants liberty abroad, that is to say the same national rights as other peoples.

The German people wants a new political, legal and economic order at home; it wants peace in Germany, peace in Europe, and peace in the world.

Am I not just as much a part of the German people as Adolf Hitler?

Are the millions of workers, peasants, Catholics, and socialists not a part of the German people? Are the fighters of the Black Front and officers like Pastor Niemöller and Colonel Mahraun[1] not part of the German people?

I have addressed millions of Germans; hundreds of thousands of Hitler's followers have read my articles; tens of thousands have read my books and pamphlets. I can vouch that the best of my compatriots only followed Hitler so long as they saw in him the standard-bearer of the German revolution; and I believe that all the healthy and honourable elements in my country will cease to follow him on the day on which they realize how they have been deceived. That day, if it

[1] A German officer who made an attempt at *rapprochement* between Germany and France. He lost an eye as a result of treatment received in a concentration camp.

has not already come, is near. For when it comes to choosing between Hitler and Germany, every German workman, peasant and soldier, every German intellectual and every German officer will not hesitate to choose Germany.

Our duty in this is quite clear. The question: Hitler or Germany? must be put to the German people night and day. It should be a permanent obsession to them, troubling them in the silence of the night. By word and by deed they must be shown that it is the duty of every lover of Germany to oppose Hitler.

Europe and Germany must unite in this struggle, for German chaos can only lead to European chaos.

But the decision, the victory, must come in Germany itself. The defeat of Hitler and Hitler's régime must coincide with the defeat of Prussianism. Aided by the spiritual forces of Christianity and the Allied coalition that has arisen to fight the Prusso-Bolshevik peril, Germany must herself crush Prussianism, politically, morally and territorially.

The crushing of Prussianism will mean the substitution of right for might, of the spirit of co-operation for the will to power. The spirit of European unity will replace the spirit of European domination.

What the crushing of Prussia will involve in practice will be the cantonization of Germany, the creation of a federation of independent provinces, governed by local authorities and free to live according to their regional traditions.

The crushing of Prussia will involve laying bare and

destroying the roots of militarism and the Junker clique, as well as the roots of Pan-Germanism, the ideal of the big industrialists.

For this purpose it will be necessary to break up the big estates, nationalize heavy industry and, finally, reform the German system of education.

Is that a revolution? Certainly. It has been convulsing Germany for twenty years. Its period of preparation lasted from 1920 to 1930, and its period of destruction, under Hitler's régime, fell between 1930 and 1940. It is now on the brink of the third period, that of reconstruction.

Hitler was the demon of destruction, and hence the very essence of the second period.

Hitler's second sense explains why, ever since the middle of 1939, he has never ceased talking of his approaching death.

It matters little whether he dies of cancer of the throat, as Professor Sauerbruch confided to one of my friends on December 15, 1939, or whether he is shot by one of his own followers, as was predicted by the industrialist Hugenberg in June, 1933, when, in spite of Hitler's solemn promise to make no changes for four years, he was dropped from Hitler's Cabinet formed in the previous January.

I shall never forget the last words of my last conversation with Gregor before my flight to Austria.

'You'll see,' my brother said to me, 'Adolf will end by blowing his brains out.'

'Only if there's a sufficient audience to applaud him,'

I replied, knowing his vanity, and his histrionic temperament.

Hitler's individual fate matters little.

Hitler and Stalin, Hitlerism, Prussianism and Bolshevism will be conquered by the forces of a new Germany and a civilized Europe.

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